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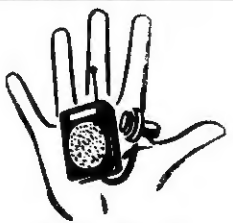

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editorial

Standards In Science Fiction

Science Fiction As Instruction

Rudolph Agricola in an edition dating from fifteen hundred and something says one writes: *ut doceat, ut moveat ut delectat,* to teach, to move or to delight.

A great deal of bad criticism is due to men not seeing which of these three motives underlies a given composition.
—Ezra Pound. *A B C Of Reading*

TO TEACH — to transmit information or attitudes or both.

To move — to arouse a particular emotion or emotions, which may or may not stir the reader toward particular action or actions. (Thought is an action — it consumes energy.)

To delight — to offer sensual or intellectual pleasure, or both.

If you examine any given piece of writing carefully, it ought to be possible to deduce which of these three motives was paramount with the writer. That does not mean the other two are necessarily absent.

The teacher wants to get information across to whoever reads or listens; but exposition which does not delight you to the extent of arousing and retaining your interest in what is being said has failed, so far as you are concerned.

The writer who wants to arouse some particular emotion in you also has to seize and hold your interest; in the process he may get some information across. But unless his purpose is deception, the funda-

mental motive is to transmit a feeling.

The person who writes with the main hope of giving you pleasure — sensual, intellectual, or both — may include information and is very likely to include a play upon your emotions.

The three categories do not exist in sealed compartments, but it is still useful to look for the principal one when you examine any given piece of writing.

IN HIS editorial for the initial issue of AMAZING STORIES (April 1926), Hugo Gernsback was explicit about his aim. He said, in part: "Not only do these tales make tremendously interesting reading — they are also instructive. They supply knowledge that we might not otherwise obtain — and they supply it in a very palatable form. For the best of these modern writers of scientifiction have the knack of imparting knowledge, and even inspiration, without once making us aware that we are being taught."

"Tremendously interesting reading" — *delectat;* "they are also instructive: *doceat;* "inspiration" — *moveat.* But in the full context of this editorial we find that the element of instruction is not, as it might appear to be by the "also" above, secondary. It is primary. A story which, to Mr. Gernsback's view, had no teaching value, just didn't belong in AMAZING STORIES, however enjoyable or inspirational it might be otherwise The story should be based firmly upon present (1926 *ff*) scientific knowledge, exploring possibilities which might be the distant future, or an extension of these possibilities in the present by way of some discovery, invention, or both. that the story describes as occurring at the present.

This was the ideal, the aim. Mr. Gernsback was a practical man and realized that he could not make this aim retroactive in the sense that every story he chose for reprint would achieve this purpose perfectly. He had to compromise with some "classic" stories which were, nonetheless both popular and, he believed, highly imaginative and well done — stories with a scientific rather "supernatural" leaning. He needed well-known or "respected" names to get the magazine going.

But his editorial defines his intent of doing everything he could to find new fiction which conformed to his definition of good science fiction.

It was Hugo Gernsback's dream that AMAZING STORIES would be not only read and enjoyed by young men and women particularly, but that through this reading they would be inspired to scientific vocations —

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to follow up some of the amazing discoveries and inventions described in these stories. He indicated later in editorial comments, or whatever (I do not recall whether it was in AMAZING STORIES, or one of his later science fiction publications, or both) that he regarded the element of serendipity as more important than that of direct duplication of some science fictional discovery or experiment. If someone, moved (*moveat*) by a particular story, sets out to see if he can find or make something described in this story and, in the process, hits upon something quite different, but no less undone before, it's as much a triumph for science fiction as it would have been if he'd accomplished what he set out to do. Science fiction was the inspiration.

But most of all, Gernsback wanted to create, through science fiction an informed and interested public; he did not for a moment imagine that every reader, young or otherwise, would take up some sort of scientific work or go into a scientific vocation. He did hope that (a) most readers would pick up valuable basic instruction from reading the stories he published (b) such readers would be convinced that science is not something that is terribly dry, dull, difficult, of dubious value to civilization and society, frightening, etc., but rather that scientific knowledge is both valuable and rewarding (c) readers would be moved to look farther into some aspect or branch of science, whether or not they wanted to become either amateur or professional workers in any scientific field.

THE STANDARD by which the Gernsback type of science fiction ought to be judged, then, is one where the primary question is whether the story actually presents accurate scientific information which any given reader might not have known before. Any story which does this can then be considered "good", (*doceat*), and presumably needs only sufficient elements of delight to keep the reader's eyes fixed on the page from beginning to end.

His potential readers could be divided into three groups: those who already had motivation toward reading science fiction either from interest in science, or knowledge of science; those who were already "sold" on science fiction from previous reading; those to whom science fiction — and for the most part science itself — were *terra incognita*. The third group was the largest; it was the members of this group he most wanted to reach and teach.

(*turn to page* 113)

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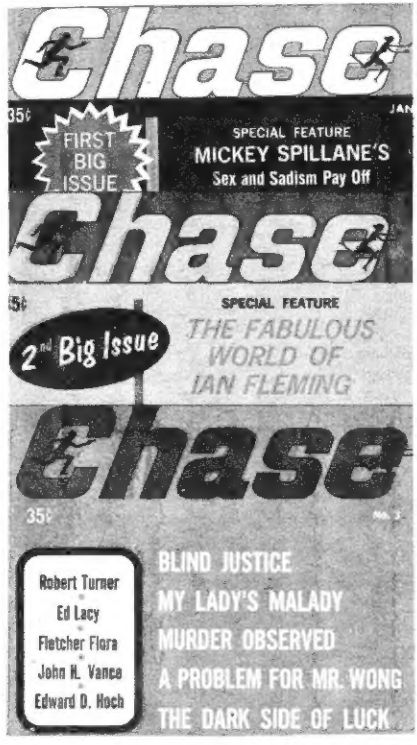

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THE MOON MENACE

by EDMOND HAMILTON

Dr. Howard Gilbert had received messages from a source outside Earth, he claimed; but he never appeared at the meeting at which he had promised to prove his contentions. And then the darkness suddenly came . . .

NEARLY ALL of the story is known to us, now. From our vantage-point in time, we can look back and see how the peril rushed upon us, how that dark, gigantic plot against the peoples of Earth rose to its tremendous climax. And, looking to those days in 192-, it seems strange that we could ever have been so unsuspecting, so blind to the gathering storm. But we did not know. It is our excuse. It came near to being our epitaph. We did not know.

One man dominates the story. It begins and ends with him. A stubby, spectacled scientist, a strange figure thus to be the hero of a cosmic epic. And yet

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his hands swept Earth up to the very brink of cataclysmic horror, then plucked it back again. We know his true greatness, now.

Even before the terror, though, the name of Dr. Howard Gilbert was a famous one, for he was one of the world's greatest authorities in certain branches of electrical science. When but two years out of the university, his invention of the revolutionary "stagnation" transformer had brought him national notice. It had brought him large royalties, too, and most of this money he had used to finance his further researches. On the summit of Ralls Mountain, in a remote section of the upper Adirondacks, stood his laboratory and his home. For a dozen years he had lived and worked there, alone except for his young assistant, Francis Townsend, and two Filipino servants. Most men would have been driven mad by the loneliness of the place, but to the shy and retiring Gilbert, that was its chief attraction.

A romantic figure, this hermit of science. So the newspapers held, at least, and they gave considerable prominence to his statements. Such statements were infrequent enough, though, for Gilbert preferred to carry on his work in silence, and give his results to the world if he succeeded. He had given the world much, in those twelve years on the mountain. He had advanced more than one revolutionary theory that was bitterly opposed at first, but later verified and accepted. And at last, overshadowing all of his previous achievements and in the end casting a cloud on them, came his sensational announcement regarding the reception of light-ray radio impulses, from an extra-terrestrial source.

For some time, he stated, he had been working on the problem of television, the transmission of vision by radio. Many others were also struggling toward that goal, but he had attacked the problem in a novel manner. Instead of first finding a way to send light-rays by radio, and then seeking a method of receiving them, he had first constructed a rudimentary receiving apparatus for such impulses, intending to reverse its design in constructing his transmitter. He had succeeded in constructing a crude form of receiver, and was amazed to find that when the instrument was put into operation it did actually receive and register light-ray impulses that were evidently being sent out from some unknown source. Gilbert's receiver was too crude to show anything more than moving blotches of shadow on a ground-glass screen, but even that was tremendous in its implications. It meant that someone else had already constructed a transmit-

ting apparatus, at least, and was sending out t h e s e light-rays translated into radio impulses, which Gilbert's receiver caught and transmuted back into light-rays.

Going eagerly ahead with the problem, Gilbert had found that the impulses he received were evidently being constantly sent out, never stopping. He had made use of directional-wave receiving apparatus over a period of weeks, then, and in that way located the source of the impulses. And that source, he claimed, was Earth's satellite, the moon. Therefore, he concluded, it was but logical to assume that t h e s e television light-ray s i g n a l s were being sent out by some intelligent being or beings on the moon itself, and that as soon as they could be more clearly received, and a transmitting apparatus constructed with which to answer them, intelligent communication might be established.

Thus far Gilbert's statement. It is useless to review now the storm of controversy and criticism that followed it. In the days that followed, he was bombarded with questions and objections. His main line of communication with the outside world was his own powerful radio plant, and for a time the ether was jammed with messages addressed to him, demanding further information. But to all such messages he gave no answer, saying only that at the proper time he would prove his theory beyond shadow of doubt. The reporters and curious people who made their way to the remote mountain laboratory were politely but firmly repulsed.

But though the central figure in the controversy thus held aloof, it raged on without him. Public interest rose steadily, and the matter occupied more and more space in the newspapers, coming finally to be headlined by the most conservative organs. In the end, the entire matter was brought to a head by the New York chapter of the World Federation of Science, which invited Gilbert to explain his experiment at its next meeting. And this invitation he accepted.

IN THE THREE weeks that passed before the meeting took place, the affair assumed sensational interest to the public at large, and was discussed pro and con by ten thousand scientists. Most of these disparaged Gilbert's statements. He held no academic position, and his former commercial success had prejudiced not a few against him. Most bitter in condemnation were the astronomers, who asserted that it was impossible for any kind of life to exist on the moon, which was virtually airless and waterless, with a sun-scorched day of two weeks and a night of the same length at temperatures near to abso-

lute zero. A few astronomers, it is true, held out doubts in Gilbert's favor, pointing out the great power of adaptation to conditions possessed by intelligent life, as instanced by man in our own world. Also one or two recalled the old theory that the moon is hollow, a theory based on the fact that its specific gravity is so much lower than Earth's, while so far as is known their constituent materials are the same.

But the weight of scientific opinion was against Gilbert, and became more so as the day of the meeting approached. A week before that day, the chairman of the federation received a long, exultant radio message from Gilbert, announcing the complete success of his efforts. "For the last two weeks," he stated, "I have been in constant and intelligent communication with the lunar people, and with their aid I have brought about a thing beside which communication is nothing. I will not only explain my experiment to the federation's members, on the day set, I will also present to them a proof of my statements, a concrete proof, a *living* proof. At that meeting will occur the most important event in Earth's history since it was thrown off by the sun. Let the world mark the day. On it I will bring forward my proof."

To many people, that message appeared the raving of a madman, but it can not be denied that when it was made public it enhanced interest in the matter a hundredfold. When the momentous day of the meeting finally arrived, the hour set found the lecture-room in the federation building c r o w d e d with people from wall to wall. Several dozen reporters occupied seats in the first rows, and a telegraph had been installed in the building.

The appointed hour came and passed, but no one appeared on the platform. The crowd stirred restlessly, the reporters scribbled, the world awaited. At last, some forty minutes after the scheduled hour, the chairman of the federation walked onto the stage. He was greeted with crashing applause, but raised his hand for silence. When the tumult stilled, he said gravely:

"I regret to announce that Dr. Gilbert has not arrived at the building, nor has he sent any message. Therefore, in view of the circumstances, this meeting is adjourned."

There was a m o m e n t of stunned silence, and then a hum of surprise s w e p t over the room, rising to an angry roar. The audience had been ready for almost any sensation, but were entirely unprepared for such a disappointment. Their wrath rose swiftly, and as they passed out of the lecture-room they gave voice to bitter con-

demnation of Gilbert, who had thus tricked them, as they considered.

Even while the last of them were leaving the room, the linotypes were clicking, and soon the papers poured into the streets, carrying the news that the expected sensational meeting had proved a fiasco. It was stated that in so far as could be ascertained, Gilbert had not come to New York at all, and was evidently still at his mountain home. A number of radiograms addressed to him by officials of the federation and by the press had received no reply whatever.

GILBERT'S SILENCE could be construed in only one way, and thus the whole matter seemed fairly clear. In a sudden craze for publicity, he had fabricated his first statement, later enhancing its effect by his sensational message. Then, unable to work himself out of the morass of deception caused by his statements, he had remained in hiding. In his quest for notoriety, he had destroyed his former great reputation. Thus the newspapers, that night. The many who had condemned Gilbert's statements were complacently triumphant. The few scientists who had half-supported him expressed chagrin.

To the general public, the news came as a distinct disappointment. It had expected something sensational, something new and astounding. Gilbert had promised that. And now he had proved to be a charlatan. There were scathing condemnations of his duplicity, that night.

To one man alone does it seem to have occurred that Gilbert's silence and non-appearance might be interpreted otherwise than as an admission of trickery. This single exception was Ray Manning, a young official of the electrical company with which Gilbert had formerly been connected, and one of the scientist's few close friends. Manning did not believe for a moment that a sudden thirst for publicity on his friend's part had led him to make questionable statements. He knew Gilbert's inordinate shyness too well for that.

Yet at the same time he was anxious, since for two days his own messages to his friend had evoked no answer. Considering the matter that night, he determined to see his friend and learn the reason for his silence. He was an aviation enthusiast, and so decided to make the trip in the big sport plane that was his hobby.

It was late in the next morning that he made his start, slanting up from a Westchester flying-field and heading north. A single man, a single plane, thundering north above the sprawling suburban cities. Rac-

ing north toward the first scenes of that dread, colossal drama that was to have all Earth as its stage. Flashing north through the morning sunshine toward the dark, squat mountain on whose summit was centered the destiny of a world.

2

ONE SEES now the impossibility of presenting any complete record of the terror that struck Earth on that fateful day in August, less than twenty-four hours after the sensational federation meeting. The thing itself was experienced by every living being on Earth, but its very nature prevented any one person from obtaining a broad view of it. To get such a view, one must go to the myriad personal accounts, and strive to connect these together as well as possible.

Thus it is to one of these records of individual experience that we turn, that of one Woodley, middle-aged clerk in a New York office. His account embraces the main features of the business clearly enough, and gives a graphic picture of how the thing struck New York City.

This Woodley seems to have been a commonplace clerk in a commonplace Broadway office. On that particular day, the noon whistles found him leaving his office, as he had left for a small restaurant several blocks away. Struggling against the surging tides of humanity in the streets, he pressed along toward Times Square. It took him several minutes to make his way to the southeast corner of the Forty-second Street and Broadway intersection.

Forty-second Street and Broadway! The focal point of a nation, the nerve-center of a hemisphere. One sees it as Woodley saw it that day, a few minutes after noon. Swift, roaring traffic, trucks, limousines, motorcycles Changing lights, shrilling whistles, humming motors. And choking the sidewalks, the usual noon-hour crowd. All of the great human hives of stone and glass had discharged their occupants for that one hour, to swirl through the streets in a roaring maelstrom of life. Portly executives, jaunty clerks, stenographers, peering wistfully into shop-windows. Crackle of voices, hoarse shouts, metallic laughter. Overhead, the hot August sun glaring down on all, baking the streets, heating tempers.

Forty-second and Broadway . . .

There have been numberless descriptions of that first coming of the terror, and many of them differ widely. But as Woodley experienced it, and as most people now admit, the thing struck quite silently, with swift, instantaneous action. One moment the flashing traffic, the

pushing crowds, the hot sunlight. The next moment —

Blackness.

Deep, rayless night. It was as if the entire world had been plunged from brilliant noon into deepest midnight, a midnight with no spark of light. It was as if a giant sponge had blotted all light from the world, in a single instant.

To Woodley, halting in sheer astonishment, it seemed that his eyes had ceased to function. He blinked, rubbed them, opened them again. Still there reigned the utter, unrelieved darkness.

For a single moment there was silence all around him, a silence stunning after the previous roar of voices. Then, from the street, came a series of loud, rending crashes, as the automobiles there drove blindly into one another, in the darkness.

A single, high-pitched female scream cut through the din, and as if at a signal, a thousand hoarse shrieks went up to heaven. In that first minute of the darkness it must have seemed to many, like Woodley, that sudden blindness had stricken them. Nothing else would have explained to them, for the moment, that sudden vanishing of all light from the world.

Woodley staggered, clung to the wall at his right. "Good Lord!" he muttered, in mild expression of his astonishment. "Good Lord!"

From the pitchy darkness around him was rising a terrific uproar, sobs and shrieks, oaths and cries for help, sound of running feet, and one or two agonized screams of pain. From all the length of the streets around him, it seemed, came that babel of fear-crazed cries.

IT CAME HOME to Woodley, at last, that the darkness which had fallen so suddenly was not one of blindness, and peculiar to himself, but was spread over a wide territory. An expedient occurred to him, and he drew a box of matches from his pocket, scratching one of them on the box's side. There was no resulting light, though he scratched several times. But in a few seconds a burning pain shot through his finget-tips and he dropped the match with a little exclamation. It had burned, but the flame had showed no light! He considered that fact, dazedly.

"Good Lord!" he muttered, again.

Out of the darkness running feet came toward him, and someone collided violently with Woodley, then slumped down to the sidewalk with him. They grasped hands, touched each other with questing fingers, in the darkness. The other seemed to be a stout man clad in a knickered golf-suit, and his voice was tremulous.

"What *is* it?" he asked, with weak petulance. "What *is* it?"

"What?" asked Woodley.

"The dark," complained the other. "The light's all gone."

"It's gone, all right," Woodley agreed. "It's an eclipse — or something."

The other digested that statement in silence, and then seemed to fumble in his pockets. Woodley heard the scratch of a match. "Don't do that!" he said, quickly, but the other made no answer. In a moment, though, there came a little cry of pain and surprise. "I told you," said the clerk, with a certain satisfaction.

The uproar in the streets had dwindled in intensity. The first roaring panic seemed to have subsided a little, though there still came shrieks and moans from the enveloping blackness. Woodley rose to his feet. The other clutched at his legs. "Where are you going?" he asked, anxiously.

"I'm going to try to get back to my room," the clerk told him. "While we're out in the street here, anything can happen to us. Autos smashing — and all. You don't know how long this dark will last."

"Don't go," begged the other, fearfully. "There'll be no one with me. I'll pay you well . . ."

But Woodley had jerked away from him and was feeling his way along the building at his right, slowly and cautiously. In his mind's eye was a plan of the blocks he must traverse to get to the furnished room that was his home, and he proceeded with great care through the smothering darkness.

WOODLEY NEVER forgot that journey across the heart of New York, under the dark pall of the blackness. The streets were still crowded with those who had been caught in them at the noon-hour, and who had so lost all sense of direction that they could make no effort to reach familiar surroundings, but lay on the sidewalks, sobbing in sheer, abject terror. He heard women calling for children lost in the darkness, their voices frantic with fear. In a night deeper than that of Erebus, a darkness pierced with cries and moans, he felt his way onward. Ever and again he collided with other slow-wandering figures, and always he jerked away from them in sudden panic fear, raising his hands to strike. It was the dark, the ultimate night, in which no man knew whether the man before him was friend or enemy.

He stumbled over prostrate figures, often, and passed wrecks of vehicles in the streets. Once he joined a group who worked in the darkness to raise one of these wrecks and release a trapped autoist, whose moans came in ghastly fashion to their ears, through the unchanging night.

But there were other purposes

than benevolent ones at work in the darkness. Woodley had ample evidence of that as he went on. He heard the clinking crash of plate-glass windows as looters began their work, under the shield of the blackness. There was a sudden rattle of shots, once, in the distance, and many cries of fear. Once, too, his ears caught the thunder of a great explosion, from far away. Still he stumbled on.

With the passing of all light, all notion of time had passed also, and he could not guess how much later it was when he finally ascended the stone steps of his lodging-house. The door he found locked, but managed to make the fearful landlady inside recognize and admit him, and so climbed wearily up to his room. There he sank into a chair and strove to understand this catastrophe that had suddenly stricken his world.

He made trials of the electrics in the room, but as he had expected, they gave forth no light. It occurred to him to test the radio set in a corner of the room, and he felt his way through the darkness toward it. He snapped a switch, twirled a dial, and was suddenly immeasurably gladdened to hear the voice of an announcer issue from the loud speaker, clear and strong. That voice coming out of the darkness reassured him not a little, even though the news it brought him was appalling in import.

For the first time he learned that the darkness that had stricken New York was no local phenomenon, for the same total blackness had descended over all Earth at the same moment. In some parts it had struck at dawn, in others at midnight or at sunset, or as in New York, at noon, but everywhere its effects were the same, blotting out every ray of light and leaving all Earth submerged in an absolute, unprecedented darkness.

With its coming, most of the world's usual organizations and activities had disappeared almost at once. Anarchy ruled the world, under cover of the dreadful night. The only means of spreading news was the radio, and in the great broadcasting stations men fumbled in darkness with their instruments, striving to keep open this last channel of communication. To their listeners, they addressed words of encouragement. Their advice was to stay quiet and unmoving, for it might be that the darkness would soon pass.

THE NATURE and cause of the blackness remained a mystery. At first it had been deemed by many an eclipse, but that theory would not account for the total blotting out of all light on Earth, including that from artificial sources. Flame burned

as fiercely as ever, but without light, and it was remarked that while the sun's light no longer reached Earth, its heat was unchanged. Whatever thing was smothering the world's light, it did not affect the heat, at least.

Scientists groped through the darkness to meet and endeavor to solve the mystery of it. It was impossible to experiment on the matter. The darkness itself rendered that vain, for they could not even glimpse the instruments in their hands. They gave it as their opinons that some freak of natural force was blotting out all light by neutralizing the light - vibrations, without affecting those of radio or radiant heat. It might be, they said, that Earth was passing through a zone of electrical force causing the phenomenon. More they could not say.

As the hours passed on, uncounted and unmeasured, more and more terrible news came out of the darkness to the awe-stricken Woodley. Riots of great dimensions had abruptly broken out in most cities, centering about the food-markets. Men fought each other in the darkness for a ham or a few cans of food, struck and stabbed blindly at each other in savage battle. Many carried pistols or rifles and instantly fired blindly at anyone opposing them. Houses were looted for food and valuables, and the darkness was made a cover for every crime that had ever disfigured Earth under the light of day.

There came word that in Philadelphia a great fire was raging, started none knew how. It was a vast holocaust, consuming block after block of buildings, and made more terrible by the fact that no ray of light came from its leaping, devouring flames. Men felt its approaching heat and fled in terror, staggering through the streets in blind efforts to escape from the burning city. Many blundered directly into the lightless flames, to meet a dreadful death.

From ships at sea came frantic appeals for help. "We are drifting blindly through the darkness," they flashed word. "No light to chart our course by, or see our compass. Crews have mutinied, officers are being killed and thrown overboard. For God's sake, help us." And there was none who could help.

The hours dragged on, and night came, night in name only, for the deep blackness changed not. Through that night the radio stations began to fall silent, one by one. Not one was left functioning by the time dawn came.

That dawn was the most terrible ever known on Earth, a dawn without a ray of light. Men felt the growing heat of the rising sun, but saw it not,

saw no single gleam of light. They stretched their hands in supplication toward the eastern sky, they cried out in their despair, and some went mad and died.

Smothering beneath the darkness that lay over it, and not knowing that a greater horror even than that darkness was crouching and tensing to spring upon it, the world waited in hopeless terror for the end.

3

AT THE MOMENT when the darkness struck Earth, Manning's plane had not been on the ground more than five minutes, at most. Shortly before noon he had s i g h t e d the humped, forest-covered mountain that was his goal. He had circled his plane high above it, glimpsing the clearing on the summit in which there stood the huge, steel aerial masts and long, low buildings of Gilbert's laboratory. Knowing that the clearing itself was too small for a landing, he had swung the plane in a great spiral down toward a narrow, open field at the mountain's base, and it was just after he had brought it to rest there that the blackness enveloped him.

To Manning, though, the thing was more terrible than to most in the world at large, for he was quite alone and it seemed certain to him that he had been overtaken by sudden blindness. It was an impression suffered by many people, that day, but was more terrifying to Manning because, being alone, he had no evidence to disprove that first thought. For a moment he lost his head entirely, staggering about m a d l y and clutching at his eyes. But that first moment of panic was of short duration. When he had gripped himself enough to consider the matter with some calmness, he began to understand something of the phenomenon's real nature.

All around him an utter silence had set in, for the songs and calls of the birds had ceased abruptly with the coming of the darkness. That fact reassured him, more or less, as to the nature of the thing, but its cause remained a mystery. An electric flashlight which he took from the plane failed to show any gleam of light, nor did matches. Again he hovered on the brink of panic, but luckily it occurred to him that the startling disappearance of all light around him might be the result of one of Gilbert's experiments. That idea cheered him a little, and he began to consider the situation. Finally he procured from the plane a heavy automatic, which he thrust into a coat pocket, then struck out through the impenetrable darkness in the direction of the mountain.

For a period of perhaps two hours he blundered blindly through underbrush and across swamps, but finally reached the rough but firm surface of the narrow road that led up to the side of the mountain. Resting for a time, he started again along this road, slowly feeling his way forward. Soon the road began to slant upward, along the mountain's slope.

For hours he pushed forward in slow, nerve-racking progress, tripping now and then on unseen obstacles, and stopping often to rest. At one of these stops it occurred to him that he must have covered over half the distance up to the summit, and smashing the crystal of his watch, he ascertained by feeling the hands that it was well after 7 in the evening. The silence and the total blackness around him had remained quite unchanged.

As he rose and started forward again, through that silence, there came to his ears from far above a faint, unfamiliar sound. It was like the deep beat of some great machine, drifting down to him from the summit above. *Throb — throb throb* . . . It murmured down to him through the pitchy blackness in a whispered pulse of sound. A clanging of metal broke across it for a moment, then ceased, but the first sound went on. *Throb — throb* . . .

He stopped for a moment, better to hear it, and as he did so there came to him out of the darkness ahead the sound of footsteps coming down toward him. He started, at that, and a twig snapped sharply under his foot.

At once the footsteps ceased. It was evident that the other had heard him. For a time there was a deep silence, neither moving. A silence broken only by the enigmatic sound from above. *Throb — throb — throb.*

The silence and the strange sound began to wear on Manning's nerves, already tense, and when he could stand it no longer he called out in a hoarse voice, "Who's there?"

NO REPLY came from the surrounding blackness but a thin, whispering echo of his words. That died, leaving only the faint throbbing from above. He listened intently, his lips suddenly dry.

"Who's there?" he called again, a little thickly. "Is that you, Gilbert? This is Manning, Ray Manning."

There was an exclamation, somewhere ahead, and then a rush of swift-running feet toward him. Before he could shrink back, a man had blundered squarely into him, out of the darkness. A man who clutched his arms and spoke with an eager rush of words. "Manning! What are you doing here? How did you get here?"

"Gilbert!" he cried, in sudden relief.

The other laid a swift hand over his lips. "Not so loud, Ray," he commanded, in a low voice. "They will hear us."

"They?" repeated Manning, in a bewildered whisper. "Whom do you mean, Gilbert? And where is Townsend?"

"Townsend is dead," said the other, tonelessly, and Manning recoiled. Gilbert was speaking on. "And the fault is mine — all mine. Townsend's death, this darkness they have flung over Earth, the hell that is about to burst on Earth — all my fault." His voice was deep, despairing.

Manning struggled with his amazement. He caught at a single word in the other's speech. "The darkness! What's causing it, Gilbert? Do you know?"

"Listen!" commanded Gilbert, and they stood in silence. Down from the summit came the same deep, beating sound, never ceasing. *Throb — throb — throb* . . . Across it again there cut a hammering of metal on metal, loud and brutal, this time. And again that died, while the throbbing went on.

"The machine you hear," said Gilbert, 'is what causes the darkness, blots out all light, all over Earth, I think."

Before Manning could comment on that, the other had led him to the side of the road, where they crouched together on the ground, speaking in low tones and unable to glimpse each other's face, under the dark pall that covered the the world about them.

"IT WAS THE moon experiment," said Gilbert, "our communication with the lunar people. You heard about that, I suppose?

"Well, it was almost three weeks ago that Townsend and I perfected our receiver and constructed our transmitting instrument. You must understand that our apparatus was one of television. It actually threw our sight by radio impulses across the void to the moon, to the receiving apparatus of the lunar people, while our own receiver did the same for them. Looking into the glass screen of our receiver, it was just as though we were looking through a glass window into the room that was the location of their installation, on the moon.

"The first thing that attracted our attention was these lunar people, these moon men. They were not men like ourselves. They were extremely different, of about the same height as human beings, and their bodies shaped roughly the same, yet still utterly different and monstrous in appearance. Their bodies were plump and dark, oily-skinned. The thick, round projections that were their arms

and legs ended in a sort of flipper, instead of in a hand or foot. The heads were very small and round, covered with the same dark skin as the bodies, and quite without nose or ears that we could see. The mouth was a narrow, horizontal slit, and the eyes were tiny, close-set white ones, without pupils. Yet for all their unhuman appearance, these creatures were more than human in their knowledge, their intelligence. Their science, we found, was immeasurably above ours, just as their race is immeasurably more ancient than our own.

"As I said, all of our communication was by sight only, and looking into the glass screen of our receiver, we saw their receiving station as through a window. It seemed to be in a big, shadowy room. The room was illuminated only by a globe of feeble purple light, suspended from above. And sitting at their apparatus were some three or four of the moon men, staring steadily at us across the gulf of space.

"Their first request, which they made clear to us by repeated motions, was that we darken our laboratory, since the daylight, streaming through the windows was almost blinding to their more sensitive eyes. We did so, and then began our efforts at communication.

"They made signs or motions, and we answered as well as we could. As we were constantly at the apparatus, Townsend and I learned their written language before many days. They taught us by holding up models or pictures for us to see, and then the corresponding written word. In the interest of it, we lost our first aversion to their unhuman appearance. And in the days that followed, we learned much concerning them.

"As we had expected, they were inhabitants of the moon's hollow core. The gradual disappearance of air and water on our satellite's surface had forced them down into its interior, ages before intelligent life appeared on Earth. In the cavernous interior they had maanged to exist, eking out their dwindling supply of air and water by artificial means. And as the ages passed, the moon men themselves had become more and more adapted to the darkness of the moon's interior. It would have been complete darkness to our human eyes, but it was not to theirs. The human eye can perceive only a few of the light-vibrations that are known to exist. The vibrations between red and violet it can see, but the infra-red, or those below red, and the ultra-violet, or those above violet, it can not perceive. Some physical and chemical devices, such as those centered around the phenomena of fluorescence, can register these higher and lower vibra-

tions, and it has been suggested that the eye of a cat, for instance, can do so partially, also. It was the same with the moon men. Their ages in the dark core of the moon had gradually changed their eyes until they could receive and register these other light-vibrations, which would be invisible to us. Thus, to put the thing crudely, they could see with ease in darkness that would be utterly impenetrable to our eyes.

"So much had they changed, there in the moon's interior, that they assured us that it would be impossible for them to live in sunlight again, that the sunlight would kill them as it kills any plant or animal brought out into it from a dark, lightless cavern. The globe of purple light in their receiving room, they said, was for our benefit, enabling us to see them, and it was the strongest kind of light they could stand.

"They had dwelt thus, in the moon's interior, for ages, and for ages they had endeavored to get into communication with the inhabitants of other worlds. Their science enabled them to send forth vision, light-rays, as radio impulses, which will pass unchecked through nearly any solid matter with ease. For ages they had sent out their visual signals, thus, never stopping, and had received no answer at all until at last Townsend and I received their signals and replied to them.

"And then, after we had been in communication with them for several days, they proposed to us a stunning experiment, which they could carry out with our aid.

"Not only, they told us, could sound and light vibrations be changed into radio impulses and sent out, but the same thing could also be done to matter. Sound waves, light rays, radio waves, and matter itself are but four different vibrations in the ether, differing from each other only in frequency of vibration. Radio waves can be sent any distance, through almost any obstacle. By changing the frequency of the sound waves until they have become radio waves, we can broadcast them, too, and every radio receiver catches them and translates them back into sound waves. Townsend and I had done the same thing with light rays, in our television apparatus. And now the moon men told us that it could be done with matter also. All that was needed, they said, was to step up the frequency of the matter vibrations until they had become radio vibrations, then hurl these radio waves across space to a receiving apparatus that could catch them and step their frequency down again, changing them back into matter. It was no more complicated,

really, than the sending of sound or light.

"They had long known how to do this, they said, and had such a matter-sending apparatus ready for action. If we were to build a similar matter-receiving apparatus, under their direction, it would be possible for one or two of them to hurtle across the gulf from moon to Earth as radio impulses, bringing with them written records, books, models of machinery, and so forth, and thus they would be able to instruct us personally in their greater science.

"WE ASSENTED to the proposition at once. Not only was the scientific side of it too appealing to resist, but I had already publicly announced our first attempts at communication, and had promised to explain my experiment. If I could produce one of the moon men themselves, when I made that explanation, none could doubt my statements. One thing suggested itself to me as an objection, and I questioned the moon men as to the difference in gravitational power on moon and Earth, thinking that perhaps with the increased power on our planet they would be too heavy to move about. But they made nothing of that obstacle, saying that there was a method known to them of reducing their own weight to any degree desired, by subjecting themselves to a force that worked changes in their very atomic structure. They could thus reduce their weight before coming to Earth, and move about here with freedom. So Townsend and I set to work under the directions of the moon men and built our matter-receiving apparatus.

"The main part of it was a flat disk of smooth metal, some eight feet in diameter, which was actuated by a complicated electrical apparatus. This apparatus seemed to make use of electrical currents to step down the frequency of the radio impulses received, and change them back into matter, but the fact is that although Townsend and I built the thing with our own hands, we hardly understood it at all. Every detail of our work was superintended by the moon men, through the television apparatus.

"At last it was completed, and ready for our trial of it. The moon men instructed us to darken the laboratory completely, letting no ray of light enter. We protested that then we should be unable to see, and after considering this, they suggested a remedy for that. They instructed us to make glasses, or goggles, of a curious sort, according to the formula they furnished us, and wearing which we would be able to see in darkness almost as well as themselves. The glasses duplicated roughly the structure of their

own eyes, and with them on we found that we could see fairly well in complete darkness, all things around us seeming to be bathed in a weird violet light. The glasses, of course, were similar to the fluoroscope, through which one can see clearly X-ray and other vibrations invisible to the naked eye.

"I made glasses for Townsend and myself according to their directions, taking the precaution to make a spare pair, too. We let them know that all was ready, and early yesterday morning we threw the matter-receiving apparatus into action. The laboratory had been completely darkened, but everything inside it showed itself to us as though under the illumination of a feeble violet light. A humming sound arose from the disk, and we waited. There was an interval of a few minutes, a sudden rustle of wind, and then there flashed into being on the smooth disk — five of the moon men!

"THEY STEPPED off the receiving disk and confronted us. Their motions were heavy and lumbering, but were not dragging, or affected by the greater gravity. I noticed, though, that they seemed to be panting on account of the thicker air.

"We stared at them without speaking, and they at us. I had seen them many times, through the television apparatus, and had become more or less accustomed to their strange appearance, but then, as they stood in the flesh, a few feet away from us, they were monstrous. I noticed, too, that each of them carried in a flipper-hand a short rod of green metal.

"For a moment there was silence in the laboratory, as we stared at each other, and then sudden fear gripped me. The unearthliness of the whole business struck me like a blow, and with sudden panic I made for the door. I saw Townsend take a step toward the five creatures, and heard one of them utter a thick, throaty cry. As I ripped the door open, one of the metal rods came up and a streak of white fire flashed from it and struck Townsend. He vanished, utterly. Where he had stood was only a little cloud of thick, white vapor, which dissolved and disappeared instantly.

"All of this had occurred as I laid my hand on the door-knob, the moon man nearest me aimed his rod at me. But as he did so, I ripped the door open, and the hot morning sunlight streamed in, striking him squarely, though not the others. And then I saw why they had been so careful to have us darken the laboratory. For when the sunlight struck him he cried out in a hoarse bellow, and then crumpled up, seeming to shrivel and wither

like a living plant thrown into a furnace.

"Before the others could act, I had hurled myself out of the door and was racing across the clearing toward the shelter of the surrounding forest. I flung myself behind a big tree, panting. The two Filipino servants had heard the commotion by that time, and came out of the cottage into the clearing, looking about in a wondering sort of way. I shouted to them to go back, but before they understood me or could move, other fire-streaks hissed out from the laboratory, through the open door, and struck them. Like Townsend, they vanished, and thick white smoke hung for a moment to mark their location, then that too melted away.

"The laboratory door was cautiously shut, then, from the inside. I knew that the creatures inside dared not venture out into the sunlight after me, so all that day I hung about the laboratory, half-mad with fear and rage, lurking behind the trees. But there was nothing to see. The door and window-shutters remained closed. I heard grinding noises from the inside, though, and low, grunting voices.

"As darkness approached, I grew more fearful. Before the sunlight passed, I managed to get into the cottage from its other side, and stuffed my pockets with food. But I got a long butcher-knife from the kitchen and stuck it into my belt. Thus armed, I crept back to my hiding place behind the trees.

"I assumed that with the darkness they would be able to come out from the laboratory, and I did not want to leave the place. It was my thought that the only thing to do was to hang about until I saw a chance to smash the matter-receiving apparatus which we had so blindly built for them. I solved the matter by climbing up into a big fork in one of the larger trees. Crouched there, I watched and waited.

"AS SOON AS complete darkness had fallen, they came out and moved about the clearing. It was evident that more of them had come across from the moon on the matter-receiving apparatus, since there were some twenty-five or thirty moving about in the clearing below me. And their numbers seemed to be constantly reinforced by little groups of two or three.

"At once they began to bring from the laboratory strange-looking tools and instruments. They set to work at a spot on the clearing's edge opposite the laboratory, and began to build up an intricate machine. The nature and details of it were about as clear to me as the details of a radio-set would be to an Eskimo, but all that night I watched them working on it,

and the big, complicated-looking mechanism loomed up larger and larger. When dawn came, they scurried back into the laboratory with the first hint of the coming light. But an hour after sunrise, some five or six of them ventured out again, wearing a strange sort of dress, or armor, metallic in appearance, which covered all their bodies. These armored ones walked directly into the sunlight and were not affected by it, and it was clear that the armor had been designed to that end.

"Thus protected, they took up again their work on the machine, and all of the morning, this morning, they kept at it. Finally, just before noon, the thing seemed to be finished, for they covered it with a great square shield of black metal, brought in sections from the laboratory. Thus in appearance the thing looked to be a square, black cube, each side fifteen feet in length, I judged, and set on its front face a complicated switchboard, replete with studs and levers. In the center of this mass of controls was one large, shining stud.

"Thus far, the purpose of the thing had been a complete mystery to me. But after stepping back and surveying it a moment, one of the six armored figures stepped up to it and began to manipulate the intricate switch-board. He pushed and turned and twisted on its controls for a few moments, then grasped the shining stud at the center. This he pulled out toward him, a little at a time.

"A deep throbbing sound arose from the machine at once, its rhythm accelerating as the stud was pulled farther out. Then, abruptly, all lights around me seemed to vanish at once, and I was left in complete darkness, with the machine throbbing away across the clearing from me.

"For a few moments I was dumfounded, and then I remembered the glasses which we had used in the dark laboratory. I had jerked mine off when I first had escaped from the building, but they were in my pocket, along with the spare pair. I drew one of the pairs from my pocket and put them on. The transformation was instantaneous. Instantly everything in the clearing and around me seemed illumined with thin violet light, and I could make out what was going on beneath me.

"THE SIX moon men at the machine were discarding their armor, and the others were streaming out from the laboratory. The purpose of the machine was clear enough, then. It was a device that blotted out all light like sunlight or starlight or artificial light, the light by which we see, but

which left unchanged the higher-frequency ultra-violet vibrations by which the moon men saw, and by which I could see also with the prepared glasses I wore. Possibly by opposing to the light vibrations an equal and opposite vibration, the machine neutralized them and thus made it safe for the moon men to venture out without fear. I wondered how far the power of the machine extended, how far its pall of darkness was flung. Over all Earth, I think.

"Now the moon men set to work again in the clearing, except for three of their number armed with the fire-rods, who guarded the neutralizing machine. The others brought from the laboratory great sections of smooth metal, which they laid on the ground and began to link together. Those sections, I knew, had been brought across from the moon on the matter-receiving disk, and I wondered what their purpose was. As the hours of the afternoon went by, I clung to my post in the tree, watching, wondering. But as their work went on, its purpose finally became clear to me. They were building, in the clearing, a great flat disk of metal, all of a hundred feet in diameter, a disk that was an enlarged replica of the matter-receiving one in the laboratory. And they were setting up beside it a similar, but much larger, actuating apparatus.

"Then, at last, I understood what their intentions were, and understood at last the evil that Townsend and I had wrought. No doubt the moon men had coveted Earth for ages, cramped as they were in their cavern world. They had had the power to send themselves through space as radio impulses, but without a receiving station on Earth, that power was useless. So for ages they had vainly signaled Earth, hoping to get into communication with someone there, and persuade him to build for them such a matter-receiving station. And Townsend and I had done so!

"We had done for them the thing that had been their goal for ages, and had given them a foothold on Earth. Now they were building a larger, greater m a t t e r - receiving apparatus which would be large enough to enable them to bring all their hordes from moon to Earth in a short time. And I did not doubt that on the moon they had a sending apparatus fully as large.

"The machine which blotted out all light from Earth was a part of their plan, it was clear. Under cover of the deep darkness it produced, they could spread at will over all Earth, and conquer it, for what resistance could be offered by the forces of man, disorganized as they would be by the total absence of light?

"And when they had conquered Earth, it was their intention, no doubt, to keep the light blotted from it always, as they can live only in darkness. The whole thing was clear to me, at last, and I realized the destroying terror which we had set free.

"I watched no longer, then, but slipped down my tree and down the mountainside. Without weapons or firearms of any sort, I could do nothing, but if I could get help! — if I could get help . . .

"And I heard you, and found you, Manning. Listen, now, and you can hear the throb of their neutralizing machine, and can hear them linking together the last sections of their great disk. And once that disk is finished, they will sweep from moon to Earth, will sally out on Earth in all their force, annihilate mankind, already terrorized by the darkness, no doubt, and so bring all Earth under their dominion. And that will be the end, for us. Man gone forever, a lightless Earth spinning blindly through the heavens, and the moon men its masters from pole to pole!"

4

A SILENCE followed as Gilbert ceased speaking, a silence broken only by the uninterrupted throbbing sound that drifted down to them from the summit, whispering mockingly in their ears. Manning was the first of the two to speak.

"What can we do?" he asked, his voice dry and despairing. "We can't let the thing go on, but what can we do to stop it?"

"Have you a gun?" asked Gilbert.

"An automatic," replied the younger man, drawing it from his pocket, his searching fingers assuring him that it was loaded.

Gilbert spoke, slowly and thoughtfully. "We might try to get help," he said, "but it would be impossible to go far in this total darkness, or find our way back here And there is no time to lose. We must rely on ourselves, I think. What we must strive to do is to smash or turn off that neutralizing machine, and thus lift the darkness. If we could do that it would at least delay them, give us a chance to get help and come back."

"But I can see nothing," Manning told him. "This blackness!"

"I forgot," said Gilbert. "Here." He thrust into Manning's hands a pair of large, round glasses, attached to a leather strap and buckle-like goggles. "Put them on. They're the spare pair I had in my pocket, luckily."

Manning placed them before his eyes, and uttered an exclamation. The total blackness which he had stumbled through for hours gave way to a glow-

ing, violet light, which feebly illuminated the scene around him. He saw the rough road, the looming, dark trees around him, and Gilbert's chubby figure beside him.

"This is my plan," Gilbert told him: "We'll creep up to the summit, to the edge of the clearing, and then separate. I'll get around to the other side of the clearing, taking your pistol with me, if you'll lend it, and make a commotion there, cry out and fire the gun. That ought to draw all in the clearing after me in pursuit. If it does, you will have a chance to get to the neutralizing machine and smash it, or turn it off at least. If you can break it in some way, it will give you a chance to get back out of the clearing and then you can go for help in your plane, come back and bomb the entire summit, if necessary. The whole thing depends on whether the guards at the neutralizing machine will leave it when I start my disturbance."

"But you're liable to be caught," Manning protested. "You're taking the most dangerous part on yourself."

"No," denied Gilbert, "the risks are the same for both of us. And I can easily get away from them, I think."

He rose to his feet and Manning followed his example. Looking at his watch, Manning perceived that it was almost midnight. He handed his pistol to Gilbert, who examined it closely, and then started forward up the slanting road, the younger man following close behind him.

AS THEY NEARED the summit there came to their ears, louder and louder, the sounds of the activity there, the throbbing machine, the clangor of metal on metal, and a deep chorus of grunting, hoarse voices. His breath coming fast, Manning moved onward after his friend.

Gilbert soon left the road and moved up through thick underbrush and between great trees, slowly and quietly, the noises ahead of them growing ever stronger. Finally he dropped to his hands and knees and began to crawl forward, Manning following his example. Abruptly they came to the forest's edge, and there burst upon their view the whole clearing, a scene of extraordinary activity.

The violet illumination there, feeble enough, yet seemed stronger to Manning's eyes than in the forest, and he glimpsed clearly some two or three score of dark, bulky figures who were moving with surprising speed across the clearing, and in and out of the laboratory building. They were the moon men, as Gilbert had described them, dark, plump, like over-ripe fungi near to bursting, monstrous flipper-people whose appearance

was rendered even more ghastly by the thin violet light by which he saw them.

The thing on which most were working was a large, intricate machine of cylindrical shape, which stood beside an immense, flat disk of smooth metal that lay on the clearing's surface.

"They're finishing the actuating apparatus of the big disk," whispered Gilbert. "We must act quickly, Manning. You see the neutralizing machine?"

Manning turned his gaze, saw at the farther edge of the clearing a great black cube before which there lounged three of the moon men, armed with the deadly rods Gilbert had described. It was the neutralizing machine, he knew at once, the thing that was flinging down on Earth the pall of darkness he had struggled through on the mountain.

"You stay here," whispered Gilbert, "and I'll crawl around to the southern side of the clearing. Be ready, and when you hear me making a disturbance there, if all of the moon men in the clearing go to investigate it, you will have your chance. Good luck, Manning."

With those last whispered words, Gilbert turned and began to crawl away through the trees to the right, in a wide circle around the clearing. Left alone, Manning waited, with fast-beating heart.

It occurred to him to remove the glasses from his eyes for a moment, and when he did so the entire violet-lit scene before him vanished immediately, and there was only deep darkness. With a little touch of panic, he replaced the glasses, and the scene at once sprang again into sight.

The minutes passed, slow-dragging, with the suspense rapidly becoming intolerable to the waiting Manning. Then, with startling abruptness, there came from the forest south of the clearing a loud, savage yell of defiance, Gilbert's voice. The moon men in the clearing halted in astonishment, gazing in that direction.

At once the yell was repeated and a pistol-shot cracked out, one of the moon men collapsing to the ground at the shot. It was provocation enough, for all of the dark figures in the clearing began to run with lumbering haste toward its southern side, their fire-rods raised and ready for action.

Tensely Manning watched, and could have shouted with joy when he saw that the three guards at the neutralizing machine had joined the others in their pursuit of Gilbert. He saw them racing into the forest, and saw that the clearing was free of them, for the moment.

He sprang to his feet and ran

out into the clearing, toward the neutralizing machine, stopping once to pick from the ground a heavy metal bar, and then racing on. As he came toward the great matter-receiving disk he heard a slight sound that was rising from it, a thin humming the significance of which he did not grasp, at the moment. He raced on along the side of the big disk toward the black, cube-like machine that was his goal.

He had reached a point possibly twenty yards from it when a sudden fierce gust of wind smote him, almost twisting him from his feet. He staggered, swayed, strove to retain his balance. Then, as he glimpsed the thing that had abruptly occurred, he uttered a despairing cry.

For on the great disk had suddenly appeared a thick-packed mass of dark figures, hundreds of the moon men, flashed through space from moon to Earth! They glimpsed him, and a horde poured from the disk toward him. Manning strove to reach the neutralizing machine, but before he had covered half the distance a torrent of dark, bulky figures poured down on him, knocked him from his feet. He glimpsed a flipper that swung a metal tool for a blow, and raised his arm in a vain effort to ward it off, but it fell on his head with stunning force, and darkness descended on him.

5

MANNING CAME back to realization with his head still throbbing with blinding pain. He strove to raise his hands to his head, and found that he could not. He opened his eyes, found the glasses still upon them, and looking down, saw the predicament in which he was situated.

His hands and feet were tightly bound with strong ropes, and other bonds held him fastened erect to the wall of the laboratory, inside of which he saw himself to be. The door of the room was open, and looking through it he regarded unsteadily the extraordinary scene in the clearing outside.

Under the same violet illumination, the clearing lay, but now it was swarming with moon men, their numbers extending indefinitely into the surrounding forest. There were thousands in the clearing, he saw, and their numbers were constantly being reinforced by the arrival of new hordes on the great disk, who flashed into being there and then streamed off the disk to make way for the arrival of the next mass, a few moments later. They brought with them tools and machines and great sections of metal, which they carried into the clearing and down the mountainside.

Stabbing, blinding pains again closed Manning's eyes, and he

lapsed into semi-consciousness, only half-hearing the din in the clearing. He tried to clear his mind from the mists that hung about it. He remembered after an effort, his dash at the neutralizing machine, and the blow from the moon man that had stunned him. Why had they kept him alive? he wondered. Did they expect to glean from him information concerning the world they were invading? Or was it for some other, darker purpose?

He looked about the laboratory with tired eyes. There was no one else in it, though he noted beside him the smaller matter-receiving disk that had been built by Gilbert. Gilbert! Where was he? Manning wondered. Had the moon men caught him, killed him?

A sudden sharp clangor outside roused his attention, and he turned his eyes to the clearing again. A group of the moon men, he saw, were dismantling the big disk and its apparatus. The significance of that action struck him like a blow. It meant that they had no more use for the receiving disk, that all of their hordes had been flashed from moon to Earth and were now assembled on and around the mountain. It meant that to the last one they were on Earth to stay.

From the dark hordes in the clearing, and from around and beyond it, was rising a terrific clamor, a clanging and hammering and grinding that merged into one deep, beating roar of sound. That babel of sounds seemed to stretch away down the mountain's sides, around its base, and it came to him that the hordes of the moon men must number in the thousands, to be thus massed.

Glancing around the laboratory's shadowy interior, his eyes found an inset clock, in the wall to the right, and he gasped with sudden surprise. The hands registered the hour of 7, in the morning, and he knew that it had not been much after midnight when he had been knocked into unconsciousness. He had been senseless, then, for all those hours, and all during them the moon men must have been streaming from the big disk, flashing from moon to Earth. What countless hordes of them had been loosed on Earth in that time?

ACROSS THE clearing he glimpsed vaguely in the dim light the dark bulk of the neutralizing machine, and caught the gleam of the big, shining stud at its center. In front of it, he saw, there lounged again the three guards, but Manning looked at it almost without interest, sinking into a deep apathy of despair. There came again, sharp and stabbing, the

pain in his head, and again he closed his eyes.

Never afterward was Manning able to recall clearly the details of what he saw in that time he hung helpless against the laboratory wall. The pain that blinded him wiped from his mind consciousness, much of the time, of all other things, and he got but occasional vague glimpses of what went on in the clearing.

The sounds were most clear to him, the thundering clangor, the sharp tapping of tools, the hoarse grunting cries of the thousands in the clearing, the hissing and puffing of strange machines. And under all these, weaving across his hearing and his consciousness in a strange, dominating rhythm, the *throb — throb — throb* of the neutralizing machine.

He glimpsed in the clearing great constructions of metal that grew up with incredible speed under the labor of the swarming moon men. He saw vast, flat things, their surfaces crowded with massed moon men, that rose into the air, hissing, and circled above the summit. Saw others, too, great platforms upheld on gigantic limbs of metal, hundreds of feet in height, that strode about the clearing and over the forest like lordly giants, bearing other masses of dark figures on their upper platforms. And others, like writhing devil-fish of metal, whose twisting tentacles ripped trees from the forests and cleared a path for the vast spider-machines to follow.

Abruptly there cut across all the clamorous din a sharp, screaming signal seeming to come from the base of the mountain, yet clear and loud in spite of the distance. It was answered from the striding giants in the clearing, who now crashed down the slope toward it, and was answered too by the hissing, circling things above, that slanted off into the darkness in answer to that call. From all around the sides of the mountain the sharp signal was repeated, and the ground quivered beneath the engines of the moon men as they moved gigantically down its sides.

The swarms of moon men left in the clearing were leaving, too, following in the wake of the great machines. In an incredibly short space of time, it seemed, the violet-lit clearing was almost deserted. In the forests to the west of it, Manning heard the voices of a score of the moon men, and the grinding sound of some machine which they worked on there, and across the open space from him still remained the three guards of the neutralizing machine, but except for them the clearing was deserted.

He was listening to the distant, retreating clamor of the

marching forces of the moon men when there came from just beside him, it seemed, a sound that suddenly roused him to alertness. It was a low scratching, a fumbling at the window beside him, which began to open with slow caution. His head twisted to one side, Manning watched, suddenly breathless.

In a moment the window was quietly opened, and a dark figure crept through, closing it behind him. With an effort, Manning restrained the exclamation that rushed to his lips. It was Gilbert!

GILBERT CAME stealthily toward him. "Manning" he whispered. "Thank God you're safe! I saw them carry you into the laboratory and thought you were dead."

"I thought you were dead, too," Manning whispered. "I heard them after you, in the forest there."

"I climbed a tree," the scientist told him. "Waited in it for hours until just now, when they left the clearing. Manning, this a chance in a million to lift the darkness, to destroy the neutralizing machine."

He pulled a knife from his pocket and began to sever Manning's bonds. "Together we can . . ." His voice suddenly ceased as Manning ejected a warning whisper. The suspicions of the guards at the neutralizing machine had been aroused, and two of the three were coming across the clearing toward the laboratory, their fire-rods gripped in their flipper-hands and pointing toward the building's door.

Gilbert slipped to a window, watched their approach. They came closer, walking more slowly, were within forty feet of the door, thirty-five, thirty, closer, closer . . .

A series of swift, stunning reports almost deafened Manning as Gilbert fired through the window at the oncoming two. Both slumped down to the ground, and Gilbert ran to the door.

From the forests to the west of the clearing came hoarse cries of alarm, and then a crashing of underbrush as the moon men there lumbered in haste toward the clearing.

"Gilbert!" Manning screamed. "The machine . . ."

But Gilbert was already out of the laboratory and racing across the violet-lit clearing toward the dark, square, neutralizing machine. The guard there saw him coming, raised his fire-rod, pointed it . . .

A STREAK OF white fire ripped across the clearing, but Gilbert had thrown himself to the ground and to one side, so that it grazed by him. His pistol cracked, and the moon man at the machine fell. Manning

cried out in exultation. His own hands were free, and he was struggling to loosen the bonds that held him to the wall. The crashing in the forest to the west was louder and louder, nearer and nearer.

Abruptly, though, Manning shouted sudden warning. The fallen moon man at the machine had raised himself, and again a fire-streak flashed from it. At Manning's shout, Gilbert had again swerved, but not quickly enough to avoid the deadly weapon for the second time, and the white streak seemed to strike his legs and feet and flow over them as he threw himself to one side. Manning shut his eyes in sickening horror. For that white streak had changed to a ilttle puff of white smoke, and that instantly drifted away, revealing Gilbert lying prone on the ground, his legs from the knees down suddenly vanished — disintegrated. The guard at the machine had fallen too, and lay quite still.

Suddenly Manning shoulted his friend's name, in a great voice. Gilbert had raised his shattered body a little, had turned in his crouching position so that he faced the neutralizing machine, half the clearing's width away from him. With an infinite effort, his right arm came up, the pistol gripped in his hand. He took slow aim at the great machine, at the big shining stud on its surface.

A dozen moon men burst into the clearing at its western edge, and halted as they saw. Their fire-rods swung up and a half score of destroying white streaks flashed toward the crouching Gilbert.

But as they did so, his pistol cracked, and Manning saw the shining stud drive suddenly in ward under the smashing impetus of the heavy bullet. Only a dissolving cloud of thick white vapor marked the spot where Gilbert had been. The throbbing of the great machine suddenly stopped.

The moon men in the clearing staggered about, uttered hoarse cries. Manning ripped the glasses from his eyes, then covered them again, half-blinded. For a flood of brilliant, golden sunlight was pouring down from above, bathing all on the summit in its hot glare. And under that dazzling illumination, the moon men twisted about in blind confusion, fell to the ground and lay still.

From far away, from all around the mountain and from the distance, came faint cries of terror and dismay, from the masses of the moon men. Came too, in a moment, the crashing and smashing of their great engines, that whirled blindly about with no living hand guiding them. Abruptly then, the

clamor stilled, and there was a deathlike silence.

Manning tore from him the last of his bonds, ran out into the clearing with staggering steps, lifting his hands toward the imperial, brilliant orb above.

The sun! The sun. The blessed sun! Gilbert's shot had released its light upon the world, had turned off the machine, the ray, that had blotted all light from Earth. The sun! It had shriveled and killed the invading hosts of the moon men in a single moment, had slain them in their countless thousands like flowers cut down by frost.

All over the summit, in the clearing and surrounding forests, there continued for minutes the same deathlike silence. Then suddenly every bird was singing . . .

6

NIGHT HAD COME again to the summit by the time Manning prepare to leave it. In the intervening hours he had smashed to pieces the neutralizing machine and the matter-receiver in the laboratory, and had then spent some hours in exhausted sleep. He walked now across the dark clearing and then paused at its edge, contemplating it.

Around him there loomed the vast, dark machines of the moon men, mighty and enigmatic engines of destruction. And, too, around him lay their own shriveled, withered bodies. As yet he had given no attention to the machines. Later, he thought, men could examine them, learn from them. Later.

Manning turned to go, then paused again. His eyes had caught a sudden gleam of light in the east. It was the gleaming disk of the full moon, just floating up in the eastern sky, like a shining bubble. From it there flowed down on the clearing a sudden flood of white light, picking out the gleaming surfaces of the great machines there. For a long while Manning stood motionless, gazing up toward it. Suddenly he flung his arms wide.

"Gilbert!" he cried softly; "wherever you are, now, do you hear me? It was you who saved us, it was you who saved us all! Do you hear me?"

Only a whisper of wind broke the stillness; Suddenly, hot, stinging tears rushed into Manning's eyes.

"Gilbert!"

For a moment, the silence reigned unbroken. Then a soft little breeze stirred the trees around him, and they leaned sighing branches down toward him. That was all the answer that came to the man at the clearing's edge, the man who stood with arms flung out toward the summer night, in greeting and farewell.

DUST

by WALLACE WEST

". . . if the computers don't lie, dust storms, the seven-year drought, and air and water pollutants will peak together this winter. . . ."

MY CITY EDITOR dipped the end of his ruler into a paste pot, withdrew a big white gob and nibbled at it while he surveyed me from under his eyeshade.

"We're working up a so-called science series for the magazine section, Ralph," he said after swallowing. "You handle it. Give the old end-of-the-world hokum another whirl to take readers' minds off their troubles."

"Maybe Earth *will* explode, like you're going to do if you keep on eating that awful stuff," I said as he reached toward the pot once more.

"Maybe. But it tastes good. Wintergreen flavor . . . Well, interview some alleged experts. And keep in touch with me like Accounting will keep in touch with your expense account."

The first few interviews were fun. An astronomer told me the end would come when the sun collided with a wandering star. A seismologist guessed that earthquakes might lay us low. A bacteriologist predictably predicted plague.

Then the office boy suggested that I call Haye Norworth, the oceanographer who was

conducting some semi-hush-hush experiments in the Bahamas.

"What can an oceanographer say about world's end?" I bribed Jimmy with a stick of gum. "Tidal wave, maybe?"

For answer, Jimmy dialed Miss Norworth's number.

"Ralph Marvin of the *Inquirer*?" answered a tired voice. "What do you want? I'm frightfully busy."

I explained.

"End of the world?" The voice rose to a pitch of fury. "Don't ask me. Look out the nearest window." Bang!

"Seemed kinda peeved." Jimmy had listened in.

We walked to one of the city room's few windows but saw nothing unusual. An October sun shone with brownish-red glare on New York's skyscrapers. Things had a mouldy look but that was due to a higher-than-usual nitrogen oxide level. (The *Times* air pollution index had been hovering around 49 all day.)

"Must be some kinda nut," Jimmy grinned. "Say! Look how thick this dust is." He wrote *James Mathew Casey* on the window sill with a finger tip. "Cleaning women on strike?"

At that I dug nostril filter plugs out of my pocket, grabbed my hat and headed for the elevator.

"THOUGHT YOU'D be coming," said an attractive, gray-haired young-old woman as I entered her midtown Manhattan office half an hour later. "But it's no use. I don't talk for publication any more. It's too late."

"But, Miss Norworth, you've talked in the past." I fished through the file cabinet that is a reporter's memory. "Back in the late '60's. You warned of water and air pollution dangers. The *Inquirer* played up the story until readers got bored, just as they had earlier about radioactive fallout.

"Right. Your paper was nice to us." She smiled for the first time and I realized that, if the weariness were discounted, her face was lovely. "Folks were worried for a bit. Then they took up smoking again and began fretting about — what was it? — the deadly effects of coffee and tea. That's when I became interested in finding out whether humans can live on the sea floor."

"To escape the caffeine habit?" I chuckled. "Say, I could use that."

"Listen!" Frowning, she picked up a sheaf of newspaper clippings and began reading headlines: "'Dust Pneumonia Epidemic Hits Texas'. 'Asthma Attacks Cause Thousands to Flee New Orleans'. 'Dust Storm Sweeps Cincinnati'. 'Drought Cuts Niagara Flow in Half'. 'Canadian Wheat Crop a Fail-

ure'. 'Atlantic Ocean Level Rises Three Inches'."

"You can't expect me to dig up that horse," I protested. "Pollution is a dead issue."

"Here's news from abroad," she answered grimly: "'Red Snow Buries Angora'. 'Drought Forces Hong Kong Exodus'. 'China Famine Worst in History'. 'Dust Drifts Block Trans-Siberian RR'.

"And this is only the middle of October." Dr. Norworth sighed. "Can you imagine what's going to happen when the heating season starts and November winds begin to blow?

"No, you can't." She held up a slim hand. "You've been conditioned to ignore pollution as a nuisance and nothing more. 'Wear your nose plugs and your goggles. You'll be all right, fella.' That's why I issue no more jeremiads. When I was getting my doctorate, the debacle might have been stopped. We could have cleaned up our rivers; planted the Dust Bowl in forage crops; banned incinerators and leaf burning; used electric autos for driving in town; that sort of thing. It would have cost the taxpayers money they would rather spend on liquor. So nothing much happened in the long run. Now it's too late."

"Why?" My spine was a ridgepole for icicles.

"Because, if computers don't lie, dust storms, the seven-year drought, and air and water pollutants will peak together this winter. Complicating the situation are the vast amounts of carbon dioxide belched from factory chimneys. That gas is causing a worldwide greenhouse effect that's melting the Polar ice caps and raising ocean levels. And the fallout's getting much worse, now that India and Brazil have started testing." She held her head in her hands.

"All of which means?" I wished I dared take notes.

"IT MEANS, among other violent things, that the world's topsoil soon will go right up in the air, the way it started to do back in the *Grapes of Wrath* days of the 1930's. Much of the dust will be so fine it can't settle. Its particles will give piggy-back rides into the lungs of animals and men for ozone, nitrogen oxides, sulfur compounds, and an especially noxious thing called peroxyacylnitrite, or Pan for short. You remember the derivation of the word 'panic' from the great god Pan. That's why I no longer talk for publication." She studied me closely. "You have a sore throat."

"Everyone has a sore throat this fall." I caught a rasping breath as the meaning of her statement struck home.

"A sore throat often foreruns emphysema or lung c a n c e r. Throw away your silly nostril

filters. Buy a gas mask and use it."

"Won't the storms abate?" I persisted.

"Not after they get a good start. If we have some good rains, and an especially windless winter, the big blow may be postponed until next year or perhaps even longer. Our government and the United Nations' World Health Organization are doing everything humanly possible to prevent the disaster. But they've started too late; it's bound to come eventually. The pendulum has swung too far to be pushed back. After civilization is wiped out, things will come back to normal, of course — but that may take decades or even centuries."

"There's no escape?" I still wanted to believe that she was trying to scare me. "Couldn't some people be quartered in mines where food could be stored and the air filtered?

"The military has taken over the mines, and has dug many subterranean caverns as well," she answered with a shrug. "I tried to tell them they might be trapped but they wouldn't listen, of course. No, Mr. Marvin of the *Inquirer*, the only safe place of refuge is on the continental shelf."

"Under water?" Unconsciously I took a deep breath.

"Yes. Until the storms die and the oceans stop rising. That's the only place where there is abundant food."

"You . . . people can actually breathe water?

"Oxygen-enriched, pressurized water, yes. I've done it for weeks. You must have seen our recent reports."

"I didn't believe them." I felt half-strangled. "Mice, maybe. But humans . . ." I took my hand away from my throat with an effort. "How will you select your, uh, finny friends?"

"Noah had an easy time," she agreed with another of her rare smiles. "He took only his family and a few animals into the Ark. We must get a better mix than that."

"The *Blue Book* and *Who's Who* should help," I ventured.

"I'm not stocking a museum with fossils," she snapped. "Our project is designed to save fishermen, farmers, artisans and, uh, a few intellectuals like yourself."

"Me?" Somehow that last comment brought home the fact that this was no end-of-the-world interview but stark reality.

"You! You don't panic much. We need people like that. Maybe this thing will ease up for a time. If it worsens, though, communication will start breaking down. Keep me informed of worldwide developments. Give me a hand here at the office once in a while. We'll keep enlarging the Bahama base as long as we can. I'll be going south

often and will need someone here that I can trust.

"No goodbye." She stood up, taller than I had thought; the body of a long distance swimmer. "Wear a mask, even if people laugh at you." We shook hands.

I FINISHED the science series and Bowen assigned me to City Hall. Winter dragged in. When Haye was in New York I found time to help and did my best to cheer her up. She proved to be well worth cheering.

As days grew shorter they became gloomier as well. By February it was impossible to ignore that something had gone badly out of kilter. The mayor, as well as state and federal officials, issued vague assurances. Food stores ran out of stock frequently. Water was severely rationed and pipes often gurgled dryly when faucets were opened. Yet the Hudson Tubes flooded one day because of a sudden rise in the sea level. Sometimes the lights went out . . .

March came in like a dusty lion. The choking, eye-smarting smog grew worse. Among other strange pranks, it reduced nylon hosiery and underthings to tatters. The dirt became appalling. Each day I left the office looking like a coal miner. The city twanged with tension. No one laughed at gas masks any more; in fact, they were in terribly short supply.

"The base off Fort Lauderdale is fully equipped and stocked," Haye told me on the fifteenth. "Tomorrow folks start moving in for their conditioning. That will be the big test. Some of them won't be able to make the change."

"Do you think I can make it?"

"Take a deep breath. Hold it." She counted slowly to thirty while spots formed before my popping eyes. "Exhale! You'll be all right, I think. You'd better be, because I'd have cracked long since without your help." She stared at me, stricken. "Oh, Lord, how I pity the millions of poor devils we *can't* help."

2

I FOUGHT MY way to the office in a swirling hell. It was far worse than the London fog I had got caught in in the '50's. People dashed past, their faces covered with wet cloths that made them into mummies. There was no sun. Street lights gleamed faintly t h r o u g h the copper gloom. Dust devils danced and beckoned at corners. The stench of rotten eggs . . . hydrogen sulfide . . . was almost overwhelming.

The city tried to continue its normal existence but a feeling of terror gripped everyone. People, who had been accustomed for so many years to consider smog an indicator of prosperity that no one need fear, at last faced the moment of truth.

The storm got worse. The *Inquirer* was half-isolated as telephone and teletype links kept breaking down. The air conditioner in the city room went out and we had to don masks.

Around noon, Jimmy dashed through the murk waving a scrap of yellow paper he had torn off the news ticker.

"Look, Mr. Marvin," he tried to yell through his mask. "Says here millions of people are s t o r m i n g Pennsylvania coal mines. Says the government is housing refugees in the pits. Says machine guns have been set up on the tipples. Pitched battles. Wow!"

"Telegram for Mr. Marvin." A messenger in dust-covered uniform staggered to my desk, coughing horribly.

"COME AT ONCE PIER NINE LAUDERDALE NORWORTH" the message read.

"Here's a chance to get that last article for the end-of-the-world series." I shook the wire under Bowen's nose. "I can get into one of those underwater barracks off the Florida coast. They've been off-limits for everyone. This is the world's biggest scoop."

"Umm." The fat man spooned up a mouthful of paste, chewed once and spat it out. "Full of grit! O.K., Ralph. Ask Accounting for an advance. All planes are grounded. Take the staff auto. Get somebody to spell you driving." He rummaged an automatic out of his desk. "There'll be fighting. Take this and don't hesitate to use it. Luck." He forgot me as he turned to shout directions about another Extra.

I grabbed Jimmy and we raced for the street. There we found the car almost buried in a dust drift. We dug it out and started, Jimmy at the wheel, I cuddling the gun.

New York was hidden in brown mist. Street and store lights gleamed faintly. Our headlights cut the smog for only a few feet as we moved in p a c k e d traffic toward Verrazano Bridge. Pedestrians struggled with the wind. Traffic policemen clung to their posts. Once, when we halted for a traffic light, a wild man sprang out of the gloom and scrabbled through the car window.

"Gimme mask!" He coughed rottenly. "Mask, for the love o' God. Throat's on fire."

I showed my gun. The creature collapsed, clawing its mouth.

"Don't stop any more for anything, Jimmy," I ordered as we got out of Staten Island and the tide of refugees thinned.

We took turns driving south. Our stuffy masks and the fact that the windshield wouldn't stay clean created major hazards. To see anything ahead was next to impossible. On several occasions we narrowly

escaped death at the hands of other half-blinded drivers.

The smog thinned when we got below Washington but the dust storm driving in from the west became worse. Gunk no longer smeared the windshield but sand soon scoured it to uselessness and took all the paint off the car as well. Eventually the carburetor clogged. I stood guard in the midst of a raddled cotton field while Jimmy managed to clear the thing.

OUR FIRST BRUSH with refugees came at Beaufort, N. C. We stopped at a service station surrounded by abandoned cars and trucks. The pump was abandoned, too, but we got it operating. The sky cleared momentarily, showing the sun as an orange ball, and instantly a horde of red-eyed specters converged on us..

We couldn't run for it until the tank was full.

"Stand back," Jimmy yelled. "We gotta gun."

"Just a kid," croaked one of the ghosts. "Come on guys."

As they dashed for the car I opened fire. The heavy automatic kicked high but my first shot was lucky. A man fell and the others dissolved into the murk.

I felt good as we drove away.

Somewhere in Georgia we ran into a new terror. The wind, a howling Northern now, did its best to force us into the ditch. Grit invaded the car and cut like needles. Flashes of static leaped from instrument board and windshield. The motor coughed like a smog sufferer.

Then, striding out of the gloom, came a tornado. Its head was buried in the sky; its foot swept the countryside like a broom.

"It's going to hit us," Jimmy yelled. "Keep your head down."

The thing struck like a battering ram. The car swerved, skidded, rolled. I slammed against a door handle and felt agony in my right shoulder. Miraculously, the car rolled over once more and landed on its tires.

"Thought we were goners," said Jimmy, stepping on the gas.

"I have a broken arm, I think."

"Tough. But I can drive the rest of the way."

Florida bore no resemblance to the Sunshine State. As we inched, with thousands of other refugee cars, through St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, and West Palm Beach, the northern smog, with its foul odors and throat-catching corrosives, inched with us. El Norte sandblasted the palm trees, bending them double and sending great fronds swooping like birds across the road. Cars collided. Drivers cursed and fought.

And, just outside Fort Lauderdale, our luck broke completely when a Greyhound bus loomed out of nowhere and rode us down.

"ANYTHING ELSE broken?" I gasped when I recovered consciousness. I lay in the deserted livingroom of a farmhouse. Jimmy crouched beside me, his face streaked with dirty tears.

"I though you *sure* were a goner that time," he croaked.

"Where's your mask?" I asked through clenched teeth. My arm was one blazing misery but otherwise I seemed all right.

"Lost it in the smashup. I've stuffed the window and door cracks with wet sheets, so the smog doesn't bother me much." He bent double with a paroxysm of coughing.

"We can't stay here long." I listened to the storm, which sounded like the howling of demons.

"I know. There's a phone here so I called the pier. It's only a mile or so. I got Dr. Norworth. She says somebody has blabbed and refugees are beginning to close in on the place. She doesn't dare leave in case of an attack. Told us to get there somehow and flash a light four times. Guards will let us in."

"You can't go out without a mask. That stuff is about as potent as a Molotov cocktail."

"Sure I can. I'm tough.." He pounded his chest to prove it, then turned away to hide another coughing spell. "I . . . can tie a wet cloth over my face," he conceded.

"If we go, squirt, you'll wear my mask."

"Nope. You gotta busted arm. That makes us even. We're pals, ain't we? Have to help each other."

Jimmy *was* tough, so I agreed at last. Armed with automatic and flash, we unsealed the door and plunged into the storm.

The stinking wind snapped shut on us like teeth, ripping our clothes at the seams and flaying our skins. The ground, in that unearthly half-light, looked like an ill-kept tennis court. There was no vegetation left; such trees as remained having been stripped even of their bark by the gritty blast.

At first we ploughed ahead into the wind and through the dust drifts. But soon we lagged. Jimmy's wet cloth dried and was of little use. My arm sapped my strength.

We would have lost the road had it not been for other dim figures. Those wandered toward the pier like things seen in nightmare. Once a man came close enough to see my mask. He snatched at it; Jimmy fired. We went on alone for a time.

Lights atop the pier winked briefly through a rift in the storm. That sight of safety finished Jimmy. He clutched at his throat and his knees buckled.

"You can make it now, Mr. Marvin," he whimpered. "You've gotta live. Miss Norworth needs you."

I struggled with the clasps of my mask. They were clogged with grit and would not yield. Then, as I made up my mind to lie down beside Jimmy, I caught sight of a child's wagon which some prank of the storm had blown into a drift beside the street.

Somehow I got Jimmy on it and started dragging him toward the waterfront. Twice I fell on the slippery dust and almost succumbed to the desire never to rise again. If it hadn't been for the boy . . .

Ages passed and the pier gates loomed ahead. But between us and safety a ring of panting demons pressed against the barrier and screamed for admittance. Their faces had been lashed to bleeding pulp; their clothing cut to tatters. Their eyes were red wells of terror.

When I blinked the signal, those things that had been men scrambled toward us shrieking "Mask!"

I dropped the light, snatched up the automatic with my good hand, and blazed away. Several attackers fell but fear had lost its meaning.

My mask was ripped apart. Smog pierced my lungs. I was thrown back against the wagon, s c r a t c h e d, trampled. Would those gates never . . .

3.

I'M WRITING THIS in Haye's w i n d o w l e s s, whitewashed hospital suite. My arm's in a cast. Otherwise I'll manage.

Jimmy lies in the next bed. He has dust pneumonia, poor kid, but Haye says he'll pull through. He must pull through. That boy has nerve that will be needed down here.

Down here! Three hundred feet down on the ocean floor and this is the only part of the base that's not f l o o d e d! Damned if everyone doesn't breathe water, just like she told me.

I can see the operating table next door. Soon as I'm pronounced fit, surgeons are coming to do things to my lungs; turn them into gills or something similar. Ukkk!

Unless the storm up above abates, of course . . .

I love you, Haye, with your tired Mona Lisa smile. I I won't mind being a fish if absolutely necessary, and if you're around.

But I do hope that storm stops!

THE WHITE CITY

by DAVID H. KELLER, M.D.

John Johnson knew nature, and he predicted a severe winter on the model farm that was set up in New York City. Yet, November and December were unusually mild. Then, on the first of January, snow began to fall . . . and never stopped!

THE TWO MEN sat on a log talking.

They were in a little Vermont valley, just a few acres of green land surrounded by the forest, and on every side the mountain rose around the forest. The shadows cast by the western mountains were creeping toward the log.

"I can tell the time of day by these shadows," whispered one of the men.

"From sunrise to sunset

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there is not a time that the shadows do not fall on this farm from the mountains. If the cow barn is reached, it is ten in the morning, provided it is June. At three in the afternoon there is shade in the back pasture. Of course, at noon, in the summer, there is no shadow for a few minutes, but the mountains are so high and the farm is so small that it just makes a perfect sundial. A man tried to sell me one of those brass things once to put on top of a high stone, but I said to him, 'What do I want a thing like that for, when I have the old farm?' "

"But the sun don't shine in winter?" argued the visitor.

"No, but then I use my hour glass. Got the idea from a timer for boiling eggs I saw in a store. Made a bigger one out of two glass jugs and a piece of glass pipe. Every six hours it has to be turned upside down. Cute little thing but I don't need it. You see, time does not mean much here, and I have other ways. Take a rooster. He tells me the hour during the night and if the stock is not fed promptly at six, they tell me about it till I do feed them. But I like the shadows the best of all. It took me a year to work them out, but after that it was easy. They come at the same place at the same time on the same day of every month. Much handier than a watch. A man does not have to wind the old sun up every night and have the mainspring repaired every rip-stitch."

The visitor laughed.

"You are a perpetual source of amusement and wonder to me, John," he exclaimed. "I knew your father, and he was just like you are. I have sat with him on this same log and he talked just like you about the shadows. But you had a college education. You played football and everything else at Yale. We all thought you would become a stockbroker in New York and marry money. Instead, you came right back here to this little farm, and when I come to see you, the first thing I hear is this talk about the shadows and that you do not need a watch to tell time. You are just like a Zulu who graduated from Oxford and then goes back to Africa and drops into his old life as a savage. Just what is your idea?"

"Simple enough, Mr. Vanderbie. In the first place, I like this old farm. Eight generations ago my folks were killing Indians here. Sometimes the Indians killed them. There are sugar maples down in the pastures that my folks were tapping before the Revolution. I remember my grandfather. He used to say to me, 'John! You take care of the farm and it will take care of you.' My fath-

er used to brag that, if something happened to cut off the farm from the rest of the world for ten years, at the end of that time he and his family and his stock would be alive, well clothed and hearty. I tried that for one year after I graduated. You see, I was sick of seeing people and doing things, so I just came out here, took care of the farm and had it take care of me, and for a year I did not spend one cent. Even took down the mailbox and told the R.F.D. man not to bother with my mail, but just hold it till the twelve months were past. It was a little lonely, but peaceful after all those years in college."

"I suppose you know what your college friends said?"

"Sure. They said plenty, but after some of them ate a few dozen of my buckwheat cakes with my buckwheat honey and salt butter on them they did not talk so fast. I even made my own salt. Deer lick in the woods, and I got enough salt there in a few days to last me a year. Perhaps it was not real salt, but the deer liked it and I thought that if they could stand it, I could."

"Going to keep on living this way?"

"How can I tell?"

"Would you like to make some money?"

"Now you are talking like a New Yorker. I had a dozen chances to go into business after I graduated. A man wanted to name a five-cent candy bar after me and showed me a contract for five thousand a year. Six people wanted me to sell stock when the only stock I knew anything about are horses and cattle. What do I want money for? I have money. Dad had ten thousand in government bonds when he died."

"You can go places if you have money," explained Vanderbie. "Travel and see things, shoot big game in Africa, play polo in England, get married, have children, send your sons to Yale."

"Is that supposed to be an attractive life?" replied the Vermonter. "I think I should rather stay here and milk my cows. Just what is on your mind, anyway, Mr. Vanderbie? I know you did not come up here just because you were a friend of my father."

The old man frowned, as he explained the reason for his visit.

"It is like this, John. My folks lived as long on Manhattan Island as your folks have lived here in the valley. After my wife died I started in to look up my family. Of course, I knew about them in a way, but I never really learned the real facts. The first Vanderbie had a farm in New York City. Think of that! A real farm. I found out where that farm was and, to my great surprise, I learned

that I still owned it. Of course, it was all covered over with tenement houses and dirt and filth of every kind, but the land was still there. You see, our family never sold land. No matter what happened, we never sold land. That is why I am rich today. No matter how great the depression, nothing happened to the land. I went down there and saw the farm, and somehow, I said to myself, 'What would my No. 8 great-grandfather say if he saw the way the family had taken care of his farm?' And I had a vision of putting the farm back on Manhattan again, just as it was when the first Vanderbie bought it from the Indians.

"A FARM right in the slums of New York! Get the idea? A farm with pasture and corn land and a barn, and a spring-house. Real cows and a team of horses and some stone fences. A farmer living there, making hay and milking his cows and raising his own pork. Not dependent on the city for anything. After everything was in running order I thought it would be swell to send the school children there on Saturdays to see how a real farm was run. That was an idea I got from the newspapers. It seems that in Los Angeles there were over three hundred children who had never seen a cow; so the school authorities had a cow brought into the city and had the children watch while she was being milked. Other men gave museums and art galleries to New York; so, I thought I would give a farm.

"I started in with the idea three years ago. First, I had to have all the buildings torn down. They belonged to me, so that part was easy, and they were all nearly falling down anyway. Then the cellar walls had to be taken out, and I had a lot of trouble having the streets closed, but just at that time I helped elect a Mayor for New York and I had some influence. At end of a year all I had was just a vacant spot in the slums of the city. Nothing would have grown on it. It took thousands of truckloads of soil to make it look like anything. The next thing was trees, because I wanted a wood-lot and I did not have time for trees to grow, so we moved them, and each tree cost from two to five thousand dollars. I nearly forgot to tell you about the spring we found. I built a stone spring-house over it. And then there was a fence. Pity about that, but it had to be high and barbed wire, or my neighbors would have ruined my work as fast as I finished it. I found a very old picture of a farmhouse, and I had one built just like it out of logs. A real log house, right there in little old New York, and a barn.

"Everything is ready for the ploughing. I have not any stock or poultry. The trees are growing nicely, and I have a two-acre pasture of red clover. Do you know what they call the place? 'Vanderbie's Folly!' But I have promised it to the city for a park when I die; so they simply think I am insane and make the best of it. Now, I am hunting for something. I want to find a man who will go there and live a year, perhaps five years, and farm that place, raise pigs and chickens and make his own butter, and keep bees, and keep warm in winter by cutting down my thousand-dollar trees. I want a man to come there and show the New Yorkers that a man can live right there, and not be dependent on the railroads and ferries and stores for his bread and butter. That is why I came to see you. Said to myself: 'John Johnson's son John could do it if he wanted to.' How about it? Live there for five years and run a farm-show for the children of New York, and at the end of that time I will give you exactly one million dollars."

THE YOUNG MAN moved restlessly on the log.

"How big is the farm, Mr. Vanderbie?"

"About twenty-five acres.

"Any shadows?"

"The finest in the world. Just on the edge is my new office building. I live on the top of it, twenty-five stories above the street. Just a little building, but it has its shadows, John. On the other side is a church, and that throws shadows on the farm. I have gone in the log house at times. It's peaceful there. Not like this, but I have spent a lot of money putting crickets and katydids around the place, and toads, and squirrels. I said to myself, 'The man who lives here will want to hear the katydids in August.'

"And I have a family of ground hogs living on one side of the wood lot. Of course, there are a lot of things I have overlooked that you will want to tell me about, but those are just details, John Johnson, and we can make it a real farm if you will take my offer."

"You live just on the other side of the road?"

"Yes. In a penthouse. I started to build the office building about the same time I started fixing up the farm. Had to have a place to live and thought it would be nice to sit where I could look down on my neighbor."

"You New Yorkers know how to do that perfectly," said the young farmer sarcastically. "I met a girl from New York in my senior year at Yale. She asked to be introduced to me, but when she found that I was

just a farmer getting an education and that I was going back to the farm, she walked out of the room and out of my life, and I was so mad that I didn't even try to remember her name. But I knew she was from New York. I never did care much for women, and that made me decided in my views. If I come to New York, I do not want to fuss around with any women. Write that in the contract, will you? And I forgot to ask you one thing. You and your family have always lived in New York. You people never do anything, unless you can make money doing it. You have a big investment in that farm. How are you going to cash in on it?"

The rich man laughed.

"I own one of the three big papers in the city. This farm, after it starts running, is going to be worth from a half-page to a page of real news to my paper every day, and I figure it will put the circulation up at least a million. Children can be born by the thousand in the city and, unless they come five at a time, it's no news, but when one of your cows has a calf, John, that will be real news. I bet there hasn't been a calf born in that part of Manhattan for over a hundred years. It is what the reporters call a scoop."

"You have made two mistakes, Mr. Vanderbie," cried the young man. "You should have put your farm on Forty-Second Street with the other sideshows, and you should have asked someone else to be your show farmer. The shadows have reached the granite rock and that means supper time. You were my father's friend, and I want you to stay to supper and sleep on one of my feather beds, but if you were not an old friend of the family's, I would take a pitchfork and run you off the farm."

"I did make a mistake, John," admitted the older man laughingly. "I thought you had the ability to take this job and make a success of it. I was wrong."

"Just for that I'll come to New York! No man can tell a Johnson from Vermont that he can't take any job and make a success of it. I do not want your million, but if you want a real farmer in New York City, you have found one. Now, suppose we have some ham and eggs? It is a little early for scrapple and sausage."

* * *

THE FARM in New York was all the sensation Vanderbie expected. It was real news, not only to his paper, in 193— but to every other paper; not only in New York, but throughout the nation. The heavy wire fence had to be strengthened.

Special police had to be put on duty. Every day was a holiday, as far as the crowds around the farm were concerned. Real estate boomed in the neighborhood. Hot dog stands, beer parlors, restaurants, movies, occupied every vacant floor space on all four sides. In at least a hundred office buildings, window space with the use of field glasses was at a premium. On Saturdays children by the thousands were shown over the farm by teachers appointed to the task by the Board of Education. Very orderly, very interested, very methodically they were marched hour after hour in columns of two, past the wood pile, past the chicken yard, past the cowshed, past the spring house, with its rows of spotless crocks of milk and cream and butter. They walked around the fields, down by the woodlot. They stood gravely listening to lectures on agriculture, horticulture, and every other kind of culture used on a farm.

Adults were not allowed inside the wire fence unless they accompanied school children. Exceptions were made of prominent officials, a few selected reporters, and distinguished visitors to the city.

Through it all John Johnson went ahead silently with his farm work. Busy for hours at a time, there were other hours when he sat moodily on a log, watching the shadows from the church, watching the shadows from the tall office building, watching the shadows and wondering how many kinds of a fool he had been to accept such a job for no other reason than that a man had told him he could not do it.

His fan mail was enormous, but he never saw it. Thousands who never saw him wrote him lengthy letters of advice. Other thousands asked him to go into advertising rackets. He received offers from the movie magnates, from lecturing bureaus, and last of all from hundreds of women who wanted to come and live on the farm with him as his wife. Presents showered on him. Animals and birds of every kind, varieties of seeds, farming implements, clothing, furniture. All mail was answered, all presents acknowledged by secretaries to Mr. Vanderbie. The sending of a present, the acknowledment of it, was headline news in any paper. For example, the editor of the *Main Street Critic* of Pennsburg, Pa., wrote:

"Hiram Johnan, prominent feed and flour merchant of this town, received word today that John Johnson, the prominent New York farmer, has received the peck of white clover seed sent last week by

Mr. Johnan, and will use the same on the lawn in front of his log cabin. Thus, once more Pennsburg merchants show their ability to satisfy the world."

or from Steelville, Ohio, came the announcement:

"From now on John Johnson, the only New York city farmer, will use a Nonrust, Eversharp pitchfork in feeding his cattle."

It was publicity in CANNON TYPE.

And the greatest of the financial harvest was reaped by Vanderbie's paper. It was the first to announce the birth of a baby calf, the first to tell of the planting of the buckwheat, the first to tell how John Johnson had killed a rattlesnake (placed there without his knowledge in the hopes that he would find it), or cut down a three thousand dollar tree for his winter firewood.

BETS WERE MADE as to how long it would last. What would John Johnson do when he needed a dentist, when he had to have new clothes, when he ran out of soap or flour? Vanderbie covered all bets thrust at him. The Farm Page of the *New York News* was headed day by day with the statement:

JOHN JOHNSON WILL LIVE ON HIS FARM FOR FIVE YEARS WITHOUT THE HELP OF ANY NEW YORKER!

And Johnson did! He had a few sheep, sheared the wool, spun it, wove it and made his own clothes. He took fat and ashes and made his own soap. He pounded his wheat into flour and made his own bread. He even grew some tobacco, cured it and smoked it (though never with any great pleasure.)

Every Sunday afternoon as per the contract, he talked for one hour with reporters from the *News*, walking over the farm with them and telling them about the farm events of the week. One hour, never more, never any less. He met them at the gate and left them at the gate, locking the heavy iron bars after they left. Sunday was his day. No school children then!

On the first Sunday in each month Vanderbie took supper with him and spent the evening. The two men were very fond of each other, though they did not show it. The old man had his worried moments, not in regard to the money he had spent on the farm, but on account of the man he had placed there. He wondered what five years of such a life would do to him, what he would be like when it was all

over, what he would do with the million, and whether he would finally take it.

IT WAS LATE September of the second year at the farm that the two men were again sitting on a log out in the woodlot. Johnson was clean dressed, clean shaved, clean eyed. If the months had hurt him in any way, he did not look it.

"It is going to be a busy fall for me and the two horses, Mr. Vanderbie," he remarked casually. "I have to get in a lot of fire wood, all I can find time to cut, and I have to save every piece of grass and every seed I can for the cattle and chickens. It is going to be a long, hard winter. How is the roof to the house Stout?"

"That roof would stand anything, John. Perhaps you do not know it, but that is just a log house on the outside, and the same goes for the barn. They are steel, and made to stand anything. I had some peculiar fears before I went into this venture; so I had it constructed to stand anything. Those window shutters would keep out machine gun bullets. The walls and roof are bomb proof."

"That is a good thing," explained Johnson. "I have seen roofs cave in under a heavy fall of snow. Gets heavy when it gets wet. This is going to be a hard winter. Worms are way deep in the ground and the woodchucks work as though they were going down to China. Wool is heavy on the sheep and the nuts have a thick shell on them. The squirrels are laying in stores of food and their winter nests are three times as big as I have ever seen them. Going to be a hard winter."

"Wanted to talk about that," commented the rich man. "How about closing up and going to a hotel for the cold months?"

"No indeed. Who would take care of the stock? No. I am going to stay right here for three years, four months and twenty-seven days more, but I am just telling you it is going to be a hard winter."

That same night Vanderbie went to Washington. He went to the Chief of the Weather Bureau and told him all that Johnson had said.

"Nothing to it," replied the official. "We have hard winters and we have mild winters. Every farmer has a dozen different ways of telling what the winter is going to be, and if they happen to guess right, they become prophets in their own country, but not with us. We make our predictions scientifically, and right now we expect nothing unusual. I have read a lot about this man Johnson. Publicity has gone to his head."

The newspaper man thought it over on his way back to New

York and decided that Johnson's warning was not news.

October was mild.

November was milder.

Johnson kept on sawing and chopping wood. Every blade of grass, every bit of grain went into the haymow or the grain bin. Nothing was wasted. Wood was piled everywhere, in every available space. The surplus pigs were killed, smoked or salted down. Even one of the cows was killed and the meat smoked and salted.

December passed without a flake of snow.

ON THE FIRST of January the snow began to fall. It was not very cold, there was little wind, there was nothing except just a gentle fall of snow. The next day, even though it was still snowing, the streets were cleared. It snowed all the next day, all the next night. It kept on snowing. The dirty snow was piled high in the street. Every unemployed man was at work clearing the streets clearing the railroad tracks, working, getting paid for it, spending the money. It meant prosperity for the poor.

On the fifth day of the snow storm the city suddenly woke up to the fact that something unusual was happening. By that time the fall, on the level, was over three feet. But three feet in New York was something different than three feet in the country. There was no place to put the snow. All the snow had to go on streets, and there was not enough street to hold it. It had to pile up. The time came when there was no more traffic, when walking a few blocks was an adventure and a mile an impossibility.

And it kept on snowing.

The nation became interested. New York was in trouble. New York had to be saved. But, while millions were eager to help, they found it hard to know what to do. It was gradually growing colder. The rivers were frozen. The sewers were clogged, the trains blocked. The people of New York were starving, and, while food was abundant throughout the nation, it was almost impossible to get the food into the city. The people of the city were cold, but wood and coal had to be carried and the trains had stopped running; the highways were blocked.

For decades New York had depended on the world to feed it, clothe it, keep it warm. Always there was milk for three days, food of a kind for a week, canned food for two weeks, The city used these things and got more. Now it used them and could not get more.

Had the ordinary channels of communication remained opened, with the city starving, there would have been riots, pillaging, and desperate panic.

With the snow rapidly blocking every street, the people went home and stayed there. There was fear, some robbing of stores, some distress, but for a while nothing like a panic of the millions. The chief reason for the ease of the first few days and weeks was the hope that it would stop snowing at any moment. *It always had.* People told each other that it was unusual, but, outside of a little hardship, it meant nothing. When the real truth was realized, it was too late to do anything. Each family stayed by itself. Back of this was a selfish desire not to share the little they had with others who had less.

Doors were locked and nailed shut. Windows were closed and barricaded with furniture. Five million people went back into primitive isolation. With this return to ancient habits came a return to religious conventions. Those who had never prayed before started appeals to the God they had long forgotten. The prayers were all the same, no matter what language was used or what gods were petitioned.

"Help us to live till it stops snowing!"

It snowed steadily all of the month of January. It was a storm without wind, without low temperature, without cessation. By the end of the month the city had become a white city, with the snow one hundred feet high in the streets. Those who lived above that level looked out on a clean city. Each day, every night, any stain on the snow was covered with a fresh mantle of loveliness. Much of the older part of the metropolis was covered. The taller buildings stood out; the ones built decades before disappeared.

JOHN JOHNSON lived on his farm.

His chimney gradually became a hundred foot tunnel upward through the snow. His main reason for fire was to keep the chimney open, the blanket of snow forming adequate protection against the cold of the unusual winter. His stock was well cared for, though they lived in a darkness unbroken except when he came in with an oil lamp to feed and milk them. He passed the time working, reading and doing odd jobs of carpenter work. For thirty days he had talked to no one except his cows, horses and cat. On the first of February he heard a knocking under his floor. He threw aside the rug, and raised a trap door. Vanderbie came up through the hole.

"It has been a long time between drinks," exclaimed the old man, panting.

"It has," agreed Johnson. "Speaking of drinks, you look

as though a little apple jack would help you. Have some What is the news? Is the city taking a beating?"

The millionaire dropped into a rocking chair, and drank the liquor without answering. At last he asked:

"Of course you knew about the trap door?"

"Certainly I did. I never commented on it because there seemed nothing to say. There seemed no doubt you placed it there for a reason, and I knew that when you were ready you would tell me what it was."

"I had reason all right, but it was not connected with this snow storm. You see, I always felt that something would happen some day in New York. With a lot of people growing poorer and a lot of people growing richer all the time, there was bound to be trouble. I built this farm house and I built my office building, and from my penthouse I ran a stairway down through a steel tube. Only two openings to it. One in the penthouse and one in the farmhouse. If anything happened to the city, I was going to come here and live with you. I thought that the two of us could get along better than I could in the office building.

"I never thought of a storm like this. No one did. I bet even you never imagined that it would start snowing and never stop. All you said was that it was going to be a hard winter. I knew you would be all right, and so I stayed away from you and did what I could to help everybody. I am through now. I guess we are all through. The people who are still alive have given up hope. They are leaving the city, or trying to. From my penthouse I can see thousands of black specks moving slowly through the falling snow. In all directions you can see black lines, beaten paths with little dots on them, and those dots are all moving away from the city."

"What is the good of that? That is simply panic! Most of them will die in the open."

"That is the peculiar part of it. The storm seems to be localized. Twenty miles from New York they have very little. Thirty miles away there seems to be almost a mild winter. I have not heard any news for days except over the radio, but it seems that the Government has not been idle. The entire wealth and manpower of the nation is concentrated in a ring around New York. The people who can get out can be cared for in every way, but it is a physical impossibility to get supplies in to them. The Government has advised that the city must be emptied, but even there it admits its inability to do anything more than wait on the outside and

care for those that can break through. Hundreds of thousands could have been saved if they had started to leave the city early in January. But nobody knew it was going to last. Now, when they do know, it is too late."

"How did they keep warm?"

"There were only two classes who did. The very poor and the very rich. The poor had stoves; they always did have stoves and they have kept the fires burning by tearing up their furniture, and finally the insides of their houses. Steps, partitions, doors. The very rich had fireplaces for ornament and pleasure and they have been burning up their furniture and their apartments, their books. But there were hundreds of thousands of people who got their heat through pipes from a central heating plant in the basement. All they knew about heating their homes was telephoning to a janitor they never saw to put on more steam in a furnace they never saw. They have suffered, because the janitors left their jobs, and, only in rare instances, was there anyone in an apartment house who knew how to keep a steam plant running, even if they had fuel to do it with. Of course, the fuel was soon used up, and you cannot heat an apartment house with a fire of books and furniture You need coal or oil. It was never cold, not real cold, but it was damp and dark, and I think that the death rate from pneumonia and influenza must have been very high.

"In the tall buildings the people who lived on the lower floors tried to move up. Naturally, the people who were up did not want them. I do not know the details, yet there must have been a million battles fought on the stairways of the city. But it is all over now. In another week the only ones left in this ittle old town will be those who are dead or dying."

JOHN JOHNSON rose from his chair and started to pace the floor. Back and forth and back and forth. At last he poured two glasses of the apple jack, handed one to his vistor, and started to drink the other.

"Snowing just over New York?" he asked.

"Yes, over a circle thirty miles in diameter. The farther away you get from Broadway the less snow there is."

"What does the Weather Bureau say?"

"They say they do not understand it."

"Is that all?"

"That is all."

"Then I want to say this much. What I told vou last fall was true. The signs I mentioned indicated a severe winter. but they had nothing to do with

what has happened. I know something about the weather. Even took a special course in it during the four years I went to college. Those men down in Washington are covering up what they do know. This is not a usual storm. Out in the west, up in Alaska and Canada, they have unusual storms, blizzards, with snow piled fifty and sixty feet high in the drifts, but with the snow they have a very low temperature and they have wind. Here there has just been a straight fall of snow. No wind, no zero weather. And a very mild winter all over the rest of the country, with hardly any snow. The snow that should have been scattered over the continent has fallen on one city, and it is the biggest, richest city of a big nation. I think I understand it, at least a part of it. This storm is not a natural one. It is not even a freakish one. Back of it is human intelligence. Someone is making it snow! Back of this natural phenomenon *stands some human intelligence!*"

Vanderbie looked at the farmer for some time before he reacted.

"I do not think so," he at last answered. "Once in a while things like this happened. How about the Ice Age? How about the time Earth shifted a little and the glaciers came down and tore the face of Earth and drove every living thing towards the Tropics?"

"That's true. But it happened slowly. For all we knew it took several centuries or more. Certainly not one month. You wait and see. Are you going to stay in New York? If you are, can you get some guns? Even if you are going to leave, I am going to stay and I want to be armed. Well armed. Rifles, elephant guns, machine guns, lots of ammunition, and even a small cannon. One or two of the French '75' variety would help."

"You are a dreamer, John. You need food, not guns. This is a problem for scientists, not soldiers. But if you want guns, I will get them for you. Anything you want. I did not tell you, but I have a broadcasting station, and it is still working. I can communicate with Washington."

"The last thing I would want would be publicity," said the farmer. "I have a feeling that it would do more harm than good. Do you really think the city is going to be abandoned? Are you going to stay here?"

"There is no doubt about the city. Another week of snow and the place will be a cemetery. The Government is making every effort to empty it of every living soul. You cannot appreciate the way this is arousing the nation. But, no matter what happens, I am go-

ing to stay here. It is my home. I feel about this farm the way you would feel about your farm in Vermont. Besides, there is my little daughter. She wants to stay. Right now she is all alone in the penthouse."

"I never knew you had a daughter!" exclaimed the farmer.

"Lots of things you do not know about me. She is a nice little child, and I want to take care of her. I was one of the rich men in the United States, and you know what that means, as far as the fear of kidnapping goes. She and I are going to stay right here with you. Perhaps right here in this farmhouse, if you do not care."

"It is your house. I do not know how the little girl would like it. Rather dark here, but she could play with the cat," said the farmer.

"There would be lots of things for her to play with. Of course, we can stay in the penthouse for a while. We will cross that bridge when we get to it. I must be going. Shall I tell the people in Washington anything?"

"Yes. Tell them that no matter what happens, no matter *what happens, no matter how unusual or unexpected,* to notify you and *leave us alone. Give us the news, but stay out of the city.*"

"I will do just that. But I think you are all wrong. This is a hard snowstorm, but it is a natural one. Back of it is some natural reaction of the elements."

He went down through the trap door. John Johnson closed it over him and put the rug back. Then he sat before the fire, his chin in his cupped hands.

"Too many shadows here," he whispered to himself.

IT SNOWED day and night for ten more days. By that time Vanderbie could look out of his penthouse on the twenty-fifth floor and see a field of snow beore him.

Then Washington broadcasted to him in code.

He worked the message out, told his daughter that he was going to see Johnson, and started down the long circular stairs.

"It has come, John," he cried as he came through the trap door, "and it is either the work of a crank or you were right. Here is what I got today from Washington.

"Following message received at nine this morning. 'What we did to New York we can do to Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, Panama Canal or Honolulu. Demand unconditional surrender and Government placed under our charge. Landing in New York March first. Any

interference will mean destruction of all cities. Regret loss of life, but must have unconditional surrender of your government. If this message is not made public, it will show your acceptance of our terms.' What is your advice, Vanderbie?

Signed:
Crowthers, President."

"I was right," cried the farmer. "Some one made it snow. I do not care who did it or how they did it, *they did it*. If the people of the United States hear of this, they will go mad, and that means their destruction. You must have the confidence of the President. Get word to him to keep the message quiet. It leaves me seventeen days to get busy. Those men, the ones who sent that message, are going to be here on the first of March. They are going to come in some kind of aircraft, and it's dollars to doughnuts they are going to land right on top of this farm. It is the largest open space in the heart of the city. I am going to get ready for them. I am going to take my snow shoes, go with you to the penthouse and beat it. It won't scare your daughter to see me bursting in, will it?"

"I guess not. I left her playing around the radio broadcasting room. She is a clever little thing with electricity."

Johnson suddenly shook his head.

"Won't do to have the two of you stay there. Stock has to fed, chickens attended to, cat given her milk. You two had better come down here and look after them. Know how to milk?"

"The girl does. She spent last summer on a farm."

"That is fine. I would not want these animals to suffer. I have had the team of horses for five years. Dad cared for them when I went to college. I raised them from colts. You look after them and I will look after the people who sent that message. Let's go!"

THREE DAYS later Johnson arrived at Yale. Always popular, his arrival created a senstion. He went into conference with his old classmates, he located four men who had been on the 'Varsity football team. He held conference after conference. Five days later he went back to New York with one hundred Yale men. Every one had hunted big game; every one was big game himself. It was a personally hand-selected bunch of hard-boiled, American sportsmen. And it was all done so quietly, so secretly, that few knew it was happening.

Twenty miles from New York they unloaded their supplies from trucks, loaded them on dog sleds, put on their snow

shoes and started beating their way back to the old farm. It had been snowing since the tenth, but only a little each day. They found the penthouse almost covered. Over the farm was a white field of snow, covered with crust. On all sides the tops of office buildings stuck their towers above the white sheet. They had less than a week to wait, less than seven days to prepare for their visitors. After a thorough survey of the situation they separated into small groups of five, each squad occupying the tower of one building. They had brought their own food with them. It is interesting to know that the plans Johnson made on his trip to Yale had gone through with very little change.

On the last day of February it stopped snowing and the sun shone for a few hours. The snow melted. That night the temperature dropped to zero, and a thick crust formed over the old farm. Johnson held a final conference with Vanderbie, talked over final plans with his twenty lieutenants, fed his stock and went to bed. He was up at sunrise and went at once to see the newspaper man. He found him at a window of the penthouse.

"Send your little girl down to the farmhouse, and go yourself. No telling what kind of hell is going to break loose here today."

"I am not going!" declared the old man, as he almost lovingly fingered a rifle. "It is my city and it is my farm. You do not know it, but I used to hunt elephants in Africa. The girl can do as she pleases. You will find out some day that she is rather hard to boss."

"She certainly is, Mr. Johnson, and you might as well find that out now, as some time time later. What do you think I spent that summer on the farm for? When Dad dies, that is going to be my farm, and I am not going to let anybody take it from me just by a threat."

The farmer turned around and faced a young woman. She was beautiful, but determined; lovely, and there was a rifle in her hands.

"Who are you?" the farmer stammered.

"I am Mr. Vanderbie's daughter. The one he calls his little girl. I have been taking care of his broadcasting for him and in between times I have been milking your cows for you and feeding your cat."

The young man looked grim.

"I think I have met you before."

"You certainly did. It was at the Senior Prom the year you graduated. I was anxious to meet you, but when you talked about spending your life on a Vermont farm, I walked out on you. You told Dad about it and said that it made you so mad,

that you went back to the farm and became a hermit. You told Dad all about it, but you had forgotten her name. But I never forgot you, though I have stayed away from you. You will have to admit that fact. Dad wanted me to meet you, but I knew how you felt about women; so, when you took charge of our old farm I just left you alone. That was O.K. with me, especially after I found out that there was no other woman trying to seduce you. So, I am going to stay right here. The cat might get hungry, the cows have to be milked, and you might get hurt or something like that."

"I have to be going, Mr. Vanderbie," cried the Yale man, "and when this is all over, you can get another farmer. I am through. Give your million to some one who appreciates it and your little girl."

AT TEN that morning, three airships came out of the clouds, sailed over the city and finally landed on the thick crust. They were large ships, something different from anything the hidden spectators had ever seen. Glistening metal with glass windows. Under perfect control they landed on the white, hard crust right over the farm, and in a few minutes doors opened and men came out and walked around the ships.

One minute passed and then five and then suddenly hell broke loose. From twenty office buildings French 75-mm guns poured shot after shot of high explosive shells on the three ships. Not one missed the mark. In ten minutes they were simply twisted masses of metal in flames. Men were running over the snow and now one hundred and two rifles in the hands of expert marksmen started in their work of death. An hour later everything was still, and the men of Yale poured out to finish the job.

One man out of all the men of the three air ships was alive and unwounded. All the rest were either dead or dying. He tried to kill himself but Johnson caught his arms just in time and carried him struggling to the penthouse.

"This is the end of the snowstorm," he yelled to Vanderbie.

"Looks like it," said the old man. "I am glad it is over and that the sun is shining, but I want a glass of your apple-jack more than anything else in the wolrd. But I think that this man has something to say to us."

"Nothing to say," replied the Oriental, "except to ask your permission to kill myself. Under the code of my country there is nothing else for me to do."

"I will give you your choice," whispered Johnson. "You can decide on one of two things. Either I take you personally

back to your country on an American warship, and the fleet will go with us, or you tell us just what happened to make it snow, and then you can have a few seconds alone with a loaded revolver. Make your decision and make it snappy. I have to go and look after my stock."

"There is not much to say," said the prisoner with a smile. "Since the last of December the three airships you have just destroyed, and the friends of mine you have just murdered, have been in the stratosphere over New York City. In each ship there was a weather control. It is useless for you to ask me about that, because I am a soldier and not an inventor, and, if I were the man who invented the process, it would be useless anyway, because I would let you tear me to pieces before I gave away the secret. I can tell you this one thing. We were able to bring the snow from all over the United States and precipitate it on your city. We could make it snow or we could make it rain. We could make it sixty below zero or ninety above. So, we simply stayed up there and buried your city. Our government had nothing to do with it; at least, they would have had nothing to do with it, unless your government had surrendered. In other words, it was entirely a private enterprise, financed by private funds. The brains behind it lie scattered on the snow of your white city. Scientifically, we were absolutely correct, but we failed to consider certain human equations. Who could have told beforehand that the vaunted chivalry and humanitarian spirit of the Western World would have shot us down like so many wild animals without giving us warning? without giving us at least a fighting chance for our lives?"

VANDERBIE LOOKED at him in astonishment, too overcome with anger and emotion to speak, but John Johnson, the Vermont farmer, had no hesitation in assuming the lead.

"Perhaps we were somewhat atavistic, somewhat savage in doing as we did, but we had at least a degree of provocation. In the few minutes of life remaining to you, think of the thousands of women and children you have scientifically murdered. Think of the millions of dollars of damage you have scientifically caused the nation. Perhaps you were prompted by a fine national spirit, but so were we. We are Americans. We take things standing up, face to the danger. When you play poker, you want to be fairly sure that you hold a stronger hand than the people you play against, before you make your bet. I could torture you to make you tell me

more, but I have made my promise and I will keep it. Here is a revolver, and you can go into the next room. Knowing your nation as I do, I have no doubt that you will know what to do with it. You may be a brave man. In fact, I think you are a very brave man, but you have lost your bet."

The Oriental took the weapon, bowed deep, walked into the next room and shut the door.

A few seconds later a sharp explosion told of the end of the poker game.

"I wish," commented Vanderbie, "that I had a glass of your apple jack. What is to be done next, Johnson?"

"A very important thing. Have the best scientists in the nation rushed here to go over what is left of those air ships. They may be able to learn some of the secrets which made this thing and it should be done at once. Then it is going to be spring-time soon. It is hard to imagine what that will mean, with two hundred feet of snow in the streets of New York. Of course, it will melt, but I think that the city will have to be dug out. That is a job for the nation. The whole thing is a mess. There must be thousands of homes destroyed, and tens of thousands of people dead, in their cellars, in apartments, on the snow, in the snow. When the flood comes, part of what is left will be ruined by the water. But we are a big nation and a rich one. Out of the ruins will rise a better and a healthier city, perhaps one with the slums, the band-box districts replaced by parks, breathing places for the little children. Personally I am going to disband my little army with thanks and go to see the President of this country as soon as I can. You attend to the other details. Be sure to have my stock attended to, and the jug of apple cider is in the closet on the left of the fire place on the top shelf."

A DAY LATER Johnson, the farmer, talked to Crowthers, the President, who had the ability to listen to the entire story, for over an hour without a single interruption. Johnson ended:

"And now it is all over, Mr. President. This thing has happened before and it will happen again. In the old days two men settled their disputes with stone axes. The battle of Hastings must have sounded like a boiler factory. Now science directs warfare. The battles of the future will be battles of brains instead of muscle. But there are going to be more wars. Just as long as men are men there will be more wars. The side with the better brains will win. Perhaps the side with the better intelligence will be

able to keep out of war. I think that I would advise a complete ignoring of the entire affair. I would even have the bodies embalmed and sent home with an escort of honor. But do not show resentment, don't rush into a war. Instead, start the scientists of this country to work. If inventions like that can be discovered on one side of the world they can be discovered on the other side. If this invention was properly handled, it would turn the United States into a paradise. It would mean the end of devastating droughts, the end of floods, the end of terrible blizzards. Weather control! Think what it would mean for agriculture. It would make our deserts blossom and our waste places turn into forests. Turn instruments of destruction into blessings for our people."

"You are right!" commented the President. "How should you like to stay here in Washington and direct the program? We need a man like you."

"No! For months I have been running a farm show for your friend, Vanderbie. I am sick of publicity. I am going back to Vermont. Sap is running in the maples and it's sugar time in the Green Mountains. Come up and see me some time. I have a dandy log, big enough for two men to sit on and watch the shadows. This shadow that has fallen on the nation was a deep one, but the sun is working overhead now, and I think that there won't be so dark a shadow from now on. Goodbye, and good luck. You have a lot of work to do before New York is cleaned up. But try to keep it a white city from now on. It certainly was a pretty sight to see all that snow with the sun shining on it."

Johnson sent a message to Vanderbie.

"Am going back to Vermont. As soon as you can, send my stock back home, if they are still alive. You get some other fool farmer to run your farm show for you. It was a fairly nice place to live in, but I know of a better one. Be sure to see that the cows are milked and the cat fed."

Vanderbie showed the message to his daughter, with a frown.

"He hasn't any pride!" he commented. "He could be one of the big men of the nation and he is just going back to a Vermont farm, content to sit on a log and watch the shadows."

"I suppose so," sighed the daughter. "You put a good man down there under the snow and have his pets cared for. I am going over to Paris."

"Paris?"

"Yes, I haven't got a thing to wear."

Vanderbie sent a veterinarian down to his farm.

"Save every living thing you can!" he ordered. "Put some sun-ray lamps down there and keep those cows and horses healthy. I do not know how long it will be before we can dig them out, but till they are back on Johnsons farm you have a job with a good salary. He is proud of those animals and nothing will give me more pleasure than to get them back to him alive and well."

A YEAR LATER it was spring time in Vermont. The team of horses, the cows, chickens, pigs and cat, the sheep, even a few ground hogs were safely domiciled on Johnson's farm. The maple sugar was made and for a little while the farmer had little to do except the routine chores, and watching the shadows. Near the log some skunk cabbage was bursting out of the ground, the first sign of real spring.

A rather unusual shadow fell across the ground. He looked up and there was Rose Vanderbie. The farmer frowned. The woman sat down on the log beside him without waiting for an invitation.

"Father and I came up here to see you," she explained. "We have been looking over the house and barn, and I must say that you have a sweet little home here. You have enough water power in the stream to make your own electricity, and that and a few other things would make the farm complete. But you do need a wife!"

He shook his head.

"I may need a wife, Rose Vanderbie, but not the kind you would make. You are too accustomed to pushing electric buttons and having work made easy for you. You are the kind of modern woman who does not even know how to cut bread. You buy it already sliced. I should think that your father should know better than to have brought you with him."

"He did not want to. He said it was useless. He thinks he knows all about you. But he doesn't. No man really understands another man. After you left New York I went over to Paris and bought some clothes. I really had nothing to wear, certainly nothing to get married in. And I visited the best farms in France and England. I even brought some stock back with me. And now I am here, with my clothes and my stock and my father and my preacher to marry me. I am going to stay!"

"No! I am going to have your father spank you and take you back to New York City. I have enough shadows here on the farm without having yours."

"It will be a nice shadow,

John, and after you get used to it, you will be lost without it. Come on up to the house. The preacher has to get back to New York, and I left Dad cooking the dinner, but he has had two drinks of apple jack and by this time he may be so happy that he will make a mess out of the biscuits."

BOOKS

The latest book to appear in The Anthem Series, 5111 Liberty Heights Avenue. Baltimore. Maryland 21207. is *The Index to the Science-Fantasy Publishers,* by Mark Owings and Jack Chalker. This first printing of the second edition is 74 pages, letter-sized, plus two pages of appendices and an errata sheet. The retail price is $5.00 for the paperbound and $8.00 for the hard-bound edition.

It represents a tremendous amount of work and, on the whole, is very well done. It covers an account of the career and lists the contents of the books published by all the specialists publishers who were concerned with science fiction and fantasy — but is limited to the publisher who (a) had at least one hardbound to his credit under his imprint, (b) published only fantasy and science fiction material — or related matter such as scientific non-fiction, fan and science fiction scholarship, etc.

The publishers are listed alphabetically by their imprints, from Advent: Publishers to Visionary Press, and time-wise they run from the Milwaukee Fictioneers, who issued the Weienbaum Memorial Volume in 1936 to Donald M. Grant, who got back into publishing (under this new imprint) in 1964 when he brought out *A Golden Anniversary Bibliography of Edgar Rice Burroughs.* Most of the imprints are gone now and many, many of the books are collector's items, obtainable only at fantastic prices.

Despite occasional uncorrected typos and clumsy phrasing, this is a valuable index for collectors. The only important, uncorrected errors I noted were (page 10) a failure to note that *all* the issues of the Arkham *Sampler* are out of print — they were so announced by Derleth a few years ago; (page 19) Moskowitz's *Imimortal Storm* goes though the year 1939 and relates aftermath of the Convention of that year; (page 44) Robert A. W. Lowndes was connected with some material signed Paul Dennis Lavond, but not all — and had no part at all in *Star of the Undead.*

It also would have been helpful to have noted, for the newcomer, just which of the stories in the Arkham House collection of H. P. Lovecraft's Novels were not novels but short stories or novelets.

Recommended: RAWL

RIMGHOST

by A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

In the Psionic Officer's room, the tissue of dog brain was radiating stark fear . . . and then they saw the other ship, almost touching them . . .

THERE ARE SOME people who like the Rim — or say that they do — but I'm not one of them. There are some people who get all poetical about the Last Frontier and the clean emptiness of the Ultimate Outside and all the rest of it — and they're welcome to it. I'm quite happy where I am now, Second Mate of the little *Creole Queen* plying between Caribbea and Van Diemen's Planet. Space in that sector of the Galaxy, although not crowded the way that it is in the Clusters, is full enough of suns and planets so that you never feel lonely. And even Van Diemen's Planet is a paradise compared with Ultimo and Thule, Lorn, and Faraway, and those dreary, poverty-stricken worlds of the Shakespearean Sector. (Caribbea, of course, *is* a paradise . . .)

But, as I was saying, I don't like the Rim. Too many odd things happen out there. There was that queer business of Time distortion at Kinsolving. There was that ship from nowhere that appeared off Dunsinane, let herself be manned by a crowd of ship-hungry colonists, and then vanished to . . . To nowhere? Your guess is as good as mine. There was Calver, who was Master of *Lorn Lady* when she towed *Ther-*

mopylae of Eblis and, together with his crew, collected some huge sum of salvage money. He set up shop as a shipowner, ran his *Outsider* for a while on the Eastern Circuit and then, as far as anybody can gather, vanished in the general direction of Bernhardt's Nebula — and, as everyone knows, it's one hell of a long way between Galaxies.

I could go on, but I won't. I think that I've made my point, which is this: The Rim is uncanny. I don't like uncanny things or places. I like my Universe wrapped up in a neat package of scientific fact bound with natural laws. I wouldn't mind the Ultimate Emptiness so much if it *were* empty — but it's not; it's as full as a size nine boot on a size ten foot.

I didn't come out to the Rim from choice. I wasn't running away from myself or anything else. I came out to the Rim because my ship, *Epsilon Pavonis*, one of the Commission's scruffier star tramps, was bringing a cargo of whisky from Nova Caledon to Lorn. One of the many innoculations to which I had been subjected on Nova Caledon hadn't taken and so, very shortly after our arrival at Port Forlorn, one of the local viruses started playing merry hell with my system. Our Medico, an incompetent old quack if ever there was one, washed his hands of the case and had me removed to the Port Forlorn General Hospital before I died on him. I broke surface a long time later, feeling very old and tired, to learn that the *Epileptic Swan*, short one Third Officer, had blasted off on her return voyage all of two weeks previously.

The Commission's Port Forlorn Agent wasn't very helpful. When I reminded him that I was entitled to repatriation, he agreed with me, but pointed out that I might have to wait for a ship for a very long time. There was, he said, a fairly frequent service to the Shakespearean Sector but there were as few ships running from there to the Center as from the Rim proper. He advised me to apply to Rim Runners for a job, pointing out that even though my sick pay would cease if and when I got one I should still be entitled to a passage back to my home world. I took his advice. There was nothing to lose and it was all experience.

Getting a job was easy enough. Rim Runners were passing through a period of expansion and there were more ships — mainly second- and third- and even fourth-hand *Epsilon* Class tramps — than there were officers to man them. Old Commodore Grimes, Rim Runners' Astronautical Superintendent welcomed me

with open arms and assured me that Rim Runners was *the* company for a young spaceman to join. "There was Captain Calver," he told me. "He came to us as Second Officer — he was out of the Commission's ships, too, like you — and rose to Master all in the course of a single voyage!" (He had, I learned later — but only because the Chief Officer had been killed in a tavern brawl on Tharn and the Captain had died of a heart attack on Mellise . . .)

So I joined *Rimgirl* as Second Officer.

AS SHIPS GO, she could have been worse. I was familiar with the *Epsilon* Class wagons, which helped, and, old and tired though *Rimgirl* was, she hadn't been on the Rim long enough to grow even older and tireder in Rim Runners' service.

One Captain Salvetti was the Master. He was the only one of us who was a Rimworlder by birth. He was big rather than fat — although fat was there — and he contrived always to maintain the appearance of having gone two days without using a depilatory. He wore his uniform with a certain careless contempt; all the time that I was with him the left epaulette was missing from the shoulder of his jacket, and the jacket itself was gray rather than black from the ashes of his cigars.

Plunkett, his Chief Officer, was his antithesis. He was an older man than the Captain, tall and lean and always impeccably turned out. He was known as "the Admiral". I thought at first that this was just a nickname, but learned that Plunkett had, in fact, held that rank in the Survey Service, had commuted his pension and had made some disastrous investment.

The Engineers — there were only two, one Interstellar Chief and one Reaction Chief — I didn't see much of, neither did I see much of the Electronic Communications Officer; he, as far as I could gather, spent each and every watch below poring over his fine collection of pornographic solidographs.

Lamartine, the Psionic Radio Officer, was a more sociable type. Like most telepaths he was an incorrigible gossip, and derived almost as much pleasure from oral patter as from the telepathic variety. He did not, he told me almost at our first meeting, like dogs, and so spent as little time in the Psionic Radio Office as possible. In this I sympathized with him. Those psionic amplifiers, those "dogs' brains in aspic" as somebody once called them, always give me the shivers. Too, there was some-

thing catlike about Lamartine, a feline grace that was evident in spite of his fatness, a sleekness. Perhaps the dog's brain disliked him as much as he disliked it.

Mary Jenkins was both Catering Officer and Purser. She was a willowy, ineffectual looking blonde — and her appearance did not bely her capabilities. I soon learned that the Old Man carried her aboard for only one reason, and that had nothing to do with either cookery or correct cargo manifests.

Pleydell was both Surgeon and Bio-Chemist. I'll say this for him, he was always able to distill an excellent drop of vodka. His appearance conveyed the not-erroneous impression that he frequently sampled his own wares and on one occasion, when the engineers were concerned about the loss of propellant from a leaking tank, the Mate suggested that the Doctor's breath and an ignition spark would serve for the average landing manoeuvers.

This, then, was *Rimgirl's* company. She was grievously undermanned by Interstellar Transport Commission standards and, apart from the Mate and, possibly, the Engineers, her personnel was also distinctly sub-standard. Oh, there's more, much more, to being a spaceman than wearing a pretty uniform — but, at the same time, there's more to being a spaceman than dressing and comporting oneself in a manner that proclaims to the admiring Universe, *Look what a tough guy I am!*

THE ROUTINE was easy enough to fall into. If there were a job, the doing of which was essential to the safety of the ship, it was done. If the job were mere spit and polish, it was not done. The navigational instruments functioned well, as did both the reaction and the interstellar drives. The hydroponics room, however, was a disgrace and conveyed the impression that it should have been devoted to the culture of the more noisome fungi. The control room was almost knee-deep in the ash from the Old Man's cigars and the pipes and cigarettes of the other officers. Galley and pantry were a sloppy mess.

The run soon lost its glamor. *Rimgirl* was one of the ships on the Eastern Circuit — manufactured goods from Lorn to Tharn, Mellise, Grollor, and Stree, artifacts of various kinds and all sorts of natural products back. Tharn's not a bad world — its people are human rather than humanoid, and its medieval culture has its own charm. Mellise is nothing but a few low islands in the middle of far too much water,

whose amphibious people have nothing in common with us but the desire for mutual trade. Stree is interesting — if your tastes run to oversized lizards too ready and willing to talk philosophy. Grollor, a heavily industralized planet whose people are humanoid but far from human, is even worse than Lorn.

Still, I settled down to it. I had to. Each time we were in Port Forlorn I pestered the Commission's Agent for my transportation back to the Center, and each time he was unable to give me any definite assurance. I got on fairly well with Plunkett, quarrelled now and again with Lamartine, was polite to old Pleydell only when I had to be. I seriously considered making a pass at Mary Jenkins — I could tell that she would have welcomed it — but deferred this until such time as I should be sure that I should be paying off *Rimgirl* on her arrival at Port Forlorn.

I grew used to the scenery outside the viewports — to one side of us the great, glowing lens of the Galaxy, to the other the absolute emptiness. The Galactic Lens, of course, was visually distorted by the temporal field of the Mannschenn Drive, the Nothingness wasn't, and that made it somehow all the worse. I got used to it, as I have said, but I never liked it. I was always a little afraid of it.

I had made, as far as I can remember, six runs around the Eastern Circuit and we were "homeward" bound — although I just can't imagine anybody calling Lorn "home" — on what was my seventh. Everything had gone smoothly — smoothly, that is, for *Rimgirl*. There had been the usual trouble with the Doctor — at a certain stage of the voyage he always had to be restrained from emptying a newly distilled batch of vodka into one of the tissue culture vats, the beef one, his story always being that he would show Mary Jenkins how to make *Boeuf Stroganoff*. There had been the usual bickering between the Mate and the Old Man, in the course of which the Old Man called the Mate a tailor's dummy and the Mate had called the Old Man an uncouth slob. There had been the usual tiff between the Old Man and his inamorata, as a result of which Mary Jenkins wore a black eye whilst Captain Salvetti had to conceal the long scratches on his plump cheeks with sticking plaster. There had been Lamartine's usual complaint, addressed to all who could not avoid listening to him, that his dog's brain in aspic had *snarled* at him. There

had been the usual poorly-cooked food, vile tea, and viler coffee.

Ours was a nice ship, ours was, and we all knew it.

But — she was familiar. She was the devil we knew. She was a tarnished, pitted shell packed with routine discomforts, routine frustrations, routine annoyances. No matter what we saw when we looked through them, our control room viewports were not — and, we thought, never would be — magic casements fronting perilous seas.

Then, with only six days, subjective time, to go before that voyage was over things . . . changed.

I'D FINISHED my unsatisfying breakfast and pulled myself up along the axial shaft to Control, there to relieve the Mate. Old Plunkett, spick and span as usual, was strapped into one of the chairs, amusing himself with a game of three dimensional noughts and crosses — left hand versus right — that he had set up in the tri-di chart. Outside, to port, there was the usual nothingness. Ahead there was the indeterminate squiggle of light that was the Lorn Star.

The Mannschenn Drive was humming sweetly to itself. Every meter, every gauge, was registering what it should register. Save for the growling of my outraged belly, all was well with the Universe.

"Good morning, young Willoughby," Plunket greeted me. "I have the pleasure, sir, of handing the watch over to you. (Damn! I should have spotted that! Why is my left hand always so much cleverer than my right?) But tell me, with what Lucullan feast do we break our fast?"

"One of dear Mary's incomparable omelettes," I replied.

"It would, indeed, be hard to find anything with which to compare them," he agreed. "Biterly I regret having been driven from the Survey Service by the accretion of years. There we always carried male cooks — and no woman can cook as well as a man."

"Nobody, male or female, could cook as badly as dear Mary." I strapped myself into the other chair.

The intercom buzzed suddenly. Lamartine's voice burst from the speaker. "Control? Is the Captain there? That blasted dog — it's mad, I tell you, it's mad!"

Plunkett looked at me, raising his eyebrows. "Too much of the Doctor's vodka, would you say, Mr. Willoughby?"

"He's always been scared of the thing, sir," I said.

"It's mad," came Lamartine's voice again. "Where is the Captain?"

"I can guess," remarked the

Mate. "Dear Mary, exhausted by her culinary toil, has fled to his manly arms and he does not wish to be disturbed. By the mere breaking of a connection, the Captain's cabin becomes his castle. Talking of castles — I'll hold the fort, Mr. Willoughby, while you go and see what's wrong."

"As you please, sir," I replied.

I unstrapped myself again, pulled myself to the hatch and along the axial shaft, left the shaft at the deck upon which the communications offices were located. I didn't bother to knock at the door of the psionic radio room; I just opened it and went straight in.

Lamartine was in his chair, his sleekness badly ruffled. He was staring at the big transparent globe in which lived the gray, pulsing convolutions of the amplifier. His intent glance shifted to me, his eyes very dark in the pale face.

"It's you, Willoughby," he said unnecessarily. "Where's the Old Man?"

"Why ask?" I said shortly. "What's wrong?"

My company was helping him to get over his fright.

"You wouldn't know," he sneered. "You're not a telepath."

"Then what the hell were you squealing about?" I asked.

"Nothing," he said sullenly. I saw his face, if it were possible, turn at least two shades whiter. "Nothing," he said again, but his tone lacked conviction.

"Listen," I told him. "I didn't come to this glorified dog kennel from choice. You were yelling over the intercom. The Mate sent me to find out what was wrong. What goes on?"

He pointed with a quivering finger at the brain. "It feels something," he said. "It *feels* something. It's scared. And when it's scared, I'm scared. Damn it all, man, have you never been with a dog when it's sensed something that's outside your sensory range? You felt scared, didn't you? And can't you see, won't you see, that what you felt is nothing compared with what I'm feeling?" He had something there. "All right," I said, "what do you feel?"

"That there's a door into the Unknown," he replied, "and that it's opening."

I made a rude, monosyllabic reply.

"It *is* opening," he said desperately.

I STARTED to say something —a repetition of the word that I had used before. I never got it out. Fear filled the little cabin like an almost visible miasma. I'm no telepath — but sensitivity to raw emotions is common enough. It was not only Lamartine's fear that I was feeling.

There was also the fear felt by, projected by his amplifier, the dog's brain tissue culture. And I sensed that the steady humming of the Mannschenn Drive unit was subtly changed, had become more of a whine than a hum, an eerie sound that added its own quota to the irrational dread that I was feeling.

The intercom buzzer sounded. Plunkett's voice cracked from the speaker. "Control calling P.R.O. Is the Second Officer there? What goes on, Mr. Willoughby?"

"I . . . I don't know," I replied.

"You should know." It was the Captain's voice this time. "You should know. What goes on?"

"You'd better ask Mr. Lamartine," I said sulkily.

"Lamartine," snapped Plunkett, "what *is* happening there?"

"I . . . I don't know," stammered Lamartine. "Fido is . . . mad. With the snappings and the growlings I can't hear . . . feel anything . . ."

"No signals?" demanded Plunkett. "Nothing at all?"

"Something," replied the Psionic Radio Operator. "*Something*. But it's . . . frightening, even though it's faint . . ."

"Willoughly!" The Admiral's voice was sharp. "You'd better come back to Control. Hurry!"

I hurried. I knew that it took a lot to shake Plunkett, and it was obvious that Plunkett was shaken. Besides, I was glad to get away from the stink of fear.

The Control Room was crowded when I got there. There was the Mate, of course, and there was the Old Man, and there was our useless Purser-cum-Catering Officer draped around him like a clinging vine and, at frequent intervals, being brushed off as Captain Salvetti tried to cross himself. Old Doc Pleydell was there, shocked into an approximation of sobriety. There was such an atmosphere of extreme emergency that I almost went straight to the spacesuit locker to clamber into my spacesuit; nobody else was wearing one, however.

I pushed Pleydell aside and looked out of the viewport. What I saw shocked me. There was a ship there, and she wasn't miles distant, or even feet distant. It might be exaggerating to say that there was only the thickness of a coat of paint between us, but that's what it seemed like. And a spaceship is so very fragile, and outside her thin skin is Death.

"According to the radar," said Plunkett, "she isn't there. In any case — she can't be there. She's *here*."

So the Mate's gone mad at last, I thought.

Then I read the name of the strange ship. I read her name, and I saw the device that ornamented her bows — the lissome, leggy girl bowling a hoop. There

could not be two *Rimgirls* in the Galaxy. There could not — even if the names had been duplicated, which was unlikely, the duplication of every last detail of construction and decoration would be impossible.

There were faces peering out through the other ship's viewports. I saw the lean features of Plunkett, the unshaven, fleshy mask of Captain Salvetti, the frightened white rabbit face of Mary Jenkins, the unmistakable, glowing drunkard's nose of Dr. Pleydell. There was a stranger among them — a stranger, but a hauntingly familiar one. (But one is used, I realized suddenly, to seeing one's own face only in mirrors, not as it is seen by others . . .)

"The radio!" Captain Salvetti was shouting. "What's wrong with the radio? Ask them what ship! Ask them what they are, who they are!"

"There's no joy from the Control Room transceiver," said Plunkett quietly. "I've told Sparks to tear himself away from his filthy pictures, but he assures me that he can get nothing. And Lamartine's in a screaming tizzy."

"We can't all have D.T.s," mumbled Doc Pleydell. "Not all of us. She mus' be a mirage, tha's all. Jus' a beautiful mirage . . ."

"Do I really look like that?" Mary Jenkins was crying. "Or is this a warning? Is that how I will look?" She pulled away from Captain Salvetti, retreated as far away from him as was possible in the narrow confines of the control room.

"A mirage," murmured Plunkett thoughtfully. "I've heard of space mirages, read about them, though I've never seen one. But space mirages are invariably mirror images . . . *That* is not a mirror image. We can read the name — *Rimgirl*. And the Rim Girl, like the Rim Girl on our own bows, is showing her left profile . . ." He turned to me. "Willoughby, will you pass me the torch out of the emergency locker?"

I PASSED HIM the torch. The Chief Officer pointed it towards the other vessel. I could see that my counterpart had performed the same service for Plunkett's double. I could see that the other Captain, the other Captain Salvetti, was wearing a uniform jacket with the left epaulette missing — and that, to me, was more convincing than all the other evidence that showed that the strange — the far from strange, rather — ship was not a mirage.

Both torches started to wink at once, the flashes of the other one coinciding with the reflected flashes from our own on the inner surface of the ports. *Perhaps,* I thought, *the Doctor is right after all. He must be. Why*

should a mirage be a mirror image?

But in the other control room Mary Jenkins was not huddled by herself, she was clinging to . . . to me? And the proprietorial way in which she was clinging was rather sickening.

Abruptly the other Plunkett stopped sending. Our own Chief Officer seized the opportunity, flashed a signal in rapid, well spaced Morse.

"What ship?" he sent. "What ship? Where bound?"

"*Rimgirl*," came the reply. "From Tharn to Port Forlorn."

Plunkett swore softly, sent, "*Rimgirl*, to Port Forlorn from Tharn."

"Who, repeat who, are you?" flashed our twin.

"What, repeat what, are you?" countered Plunkett.

"An interstellar ship," came the prompt reply. "And we don't believe in ghosts."

"Neither," sent Plunkett, "do we."

I let my attention stray from the exchange of signals to my counterpart, and to Mary Jenkins' counterpart. I saw that the other Captain Salvetti was viewing their conduct with intense distaste, was more concerned about it than the mystery of which both ships were part. I knew that it would be a most unhappy voyage for all concerned.

"We cannot both be real," flashed the other ship.

"Then you are not," replied Plunkett.

"You are not," was the answer.

And so, I thought, *this emergency has brought them together at last. They'll all live happily ever afterwards if their Captain Salvetti will let them. If . . . But do I look as soppy as that when I'm in love?*

I sneaked a sideways glance at our Mary Jenkins. She, so far, was keeping herself very much to herself — and for that I was grateful.

"May I board you?" asked Plunkett. "It should be possible. Our rates of temporal precession must be synchronised and our fields must be overlapping."

"Wear your thumb in your buttonhole," quipped the other Plunkett, "so we know which one of us is which."

And they, I thought, watching with horrified fascination, *are getting tired of all this and wondering how long it will be before they can slip off to bed . . . I wonder if she can cook any better than our Mary . . .*

"Permission to board, sir?" said Plunkett formally to Captain Salvetti.

"You can't board a ghost ship," replied the Old Man.

"There are no such things as ghosts," stated Plunkett in a firm voice.

And the ghost vanished.

THERE ARE NO such things as ghosts . . .

There is, however, an expanding Universe, and we are living in it. There is an expanding Galaxy, exploding into the space that was once — how many trillions of trillions of years ago? — occupied by other Universes, other Galaxies. There are the Laws of Random and the certainty that, given an infinitude of time, *everything* will be repeated, down to the last atom. (Do you remember that analogy of the monkeys and the typewriters and the eventual tapping out, purely by chance, of all the plays of Shakespeare?) There is the temporal field of the Mannschenn Drive and those other fields, about which so much has yet to be learned, that are part and parcel of our system of psionic communication.

There was another Galaxy — once — and on its periphery there were its Rim Worlds, its Rim Runners. There was a ship called *Rimgirl*. There was a Second Mate called Henry Willoughby and a Purser called Mary Jenkins and, sooner or later, they fell in love, no doubt incurring the extreme hostility of their Captain Salvetti. (I wonder what happened to them?) It was that coming together of theirs that caused the divergence, that broke the *rapport* between our two, until then, identical ships.

So I was warned in time and intended to resign as soon as we berthed at Port Forlorn. Captain Salvetti beat me to it, however, and fired me — there are more ways than one of passing a boring watch and some of them are frowned upon by even the most tolerant shipmasters. So I had to sit on my backside in Port Forlorn, housed and fed at the Commission's expense, until such time as transportation away from the Rim could be provided for me. The Commission took a dim view — and that's why I'm in the little *Creole Queen*, shuttling between Caribbea and Van Diemen's Planet.

No, I don't like the Rim. I don't like the uncanny things that happen. Especially I don't like them when they put ideas into the head of feather-brained blondes like Mary Jenkins.

SEEDS FROM SPACE

by LAURENCE MANNING

(author of *Voice of Atlantis*)

The seeds fell out of the sky, down into Brinkley's collar. He planted them in the box of earth that held a privet hedge along one side of his roof — and forgot them. But what grew out of these seeds he would never forget.

IT WAS BLOWING half a gale up Broadway, and when I turned along the side street, the rain started. Before I reached the Stranger Club, I was drenched. Inside, the rooms were warmly glowing and the silence made it seem like another world. It was nine in the evening and no one was sitting in the lounge except Colonel Marsh. He raised his bushy white eyebrows and his eyes glanced at my wet clothing like a trainer judging the condition of an athlete.

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"Hot toddy!" he said sharply.

"Eh?" I replied, rather startled.

But he made no reply — merely crooked a finger at the steward and, in less than no time, I was ensconced beside him in a comfortable chair sipping the warm stuff. As usual, the Colonel had been right. The toddy was exactly what I needed. My toes began to tingle with warmth and the trophies on the wall over the huge fireplace seemed suddenly cozy and homelike.

"Bad night outside," grunted my companion. I nodded pleasantly. "Reminds me of a curious fellow I once met — and a curious story he told. Just such a night as this," continued Colonel Marsh, and I hitched myself into a more comfortable position and took another sip. But the Colonel had fallen into a reverie and the expected story seemed in danger of never being told. I knew better than to ask for it — that would get me nowhere. Instead, I racked my brains for the proper remark.

"I'll bet he didn't offer you a hot toddy," I said at last.

It was his turn to be surprised. "What are you talking about?"

"This curious chap you mention who told you stories."

"Oh, that," he seemed to bring his voice out of his chest. "I should say not! I asked for one, though, and he stared at me as though I had offered to bite him!" After a moment he sat up in his chair and puffed out his mustache. "I never knew whether or not to believe him. Most likely he was slightly mad. What do you think?"

"You haven't told me about him yet," I reminded my companion.

"Eh? Haven't I? Thought I had. It was the trees, you know. He seemed to think they were alive and could talk to him, or at least knew what he said. Accused me of murder because I had cut off some branches to make a bonfire. Asked me how I'd like it if the trees cut off my arms and legs! Must have been mad, you know!"

"What did you go camping with him for? I should think you'd have picked better company, Colonel."

"Good God! Who said anything about camping with him? He came blundering through the woods to my campfire — all excited and waving his arms about. I told him I'd be most happy to stop burning wood if he'd provide me a nice warm coal-fire to sit beside. It was a blustery night in October and it gets pretty uncomfortable up in Maine. So he hemmed and hawed — dam' fidgety chap, you know — and invited me to spend the night with him in his camp. So I did — glad

enough, you can wager. His camp was a five-room house, modern and substantial, but set off all by itself in as dense a square mile of woods as you have ever seen."

"What were you doing up there in October all by yourself?"

"Hunting. This was years ago when I was a young man. I'd been out after deer and got lost. Figured I'd camp where I was and get back to my party in the morning. As a matter of fact, I did find them the next day. But it's curious how tonight brings it all back — I'd half forgotten. Quite mad, he must have been, don't you think? Had plenty of money and spent it all planting these dam' trees of his. Lived in a shack so he could afford to buy more land and set out more trees. In my opinion he was crazy as a coot — have another toddy?"

I could have brained the man with the ash-tray! Sometimes it's as easy as nothing to get him to spin a yarn — and then, at other times, it's harder than pulling teeth. The worst of it all is, there's nothing you can do to prompt him, for he's as obstinate as a mule. If he thinks he's being pushed, he shuts up like a clam. I suggested a glass of sherry and sighed. When it came there was a silence and the clock struck nine-thirty. I yawned vainly and began to think of going home to bed. And then, all of a sudden, the Colonel was telling his story and I didn't think of bed again for two hours.

"Blenkins!" exploded Colonel Marsh. "That was the name! Crazy as a coot — here's the story he told me. It appears he used to live in a penthouse in Greenwich Village. Had the roof to himself and had fixed it up with great boxes of earth to hold flowers and shrubs. Wealthy young cub, he must have been. Well, one summer he went on a motoring trip through New England and stopped a week at Bar Harbor. He climbed up to the top of Mount Desert and stood there one late afternoon looking down over the ocean hundreds of feet below him and stretching out to the horizon. While he stood there he heard something swishing overhead—a tiny sound—and felt two or three sharp taps on his neck. Something got down back of his collar— a small hard little object—and he fished with his forefinger and pulled out what seemed to be three seeds. He glanced up at the western sky and then ducked, for a scattered handful of the seeds almost struck his face. They passed overhead at a fairish rate of speed and seemed, he said, to be going so fast that they would land in the water a mile away down the slope of the hill. That

was all that happened then. He stayed half an hour but no more seeds went by and he was afraid it would be dark before he got back to his hotel in Bar Harbor.

"As for the seeds, he put them in an old envelope in his pocket and forgot all about them. When he got back to New York a few weeks later, he found them and, out of curiosity, stuck them in the box of earth that held a privet hedge along one side of his roof.

"IT WAS A cold winter that year, Blenkins told me. All his privet died, but what with one thing and another, he didn't get around to having new plants put in the box and, when warm weather came, it was too late and there the privets stood — dead and lifeless. Some weeds grew in the box, but he did not bother to pull them, for the dead privet would make his roof look unsightly no matter what he did. So it happened that he did not notice how very peculiar three of the weeds were until late June or early July. They must have been queer, all right, to judge from his description. At first they looked like grass, or perhaps onion shoots — tall straight stems. Then the stem grew rough and knobby and needles came out on them like a Juniper. He bought a lot of books on botany and started reading up in the hope of identifying the things, but couldn't find anything at all like them in the books.

"I don't know what he did for a living — drew dividends and drank, I expect, like many another. He used to get pretty well tanked up by evening and sit in a porch chair with a glass in one hand staring at the weeds. By mid-July he had cleaned everything out of the box of earth but the three curiosities —dead privet and all. It didn't strike him that these were growing from the three seeds that had fallen on him on Mount Desert for quite a while, he said. When it did, he didn't get excited —judged they might have been carried by the wind from most anywhere — Asia, perhaps, for all he knew or cared. He did, however, think it curious that of all the seeds he had seen flying past these three were the only ones to reach soft earth. All the others must have just missed the top of the hill—the last hill in North America—and gone on into the Atlantic Ocean. Whatever they were, they were the only three in this part of the world.

"Then the really hot New York weather came and his three weeds changed once more. All the needles fell off and large green leaves came out, like maple leaves, and the plants grew two feet in a week. He stayed in New York that summer instead of going north—he was so interested. And by August the strange plants

were five feet high and two inches through and the stems were solid and woody to the touch. He watered them twice a day now — used to pour a little whisky on the earth, I judge—and spread some patent fertilizer around. Babied the things, in fact. When all the leaves fell off, he imagined he must have killed them—that was in August But new buds opened at the top of the bare trunks, three buds exactly one each one. Out from these there sprouted branches and the trunks seemed to swell and swell as the days passed until finally they looked like nothing on earth — great foot-thick posts with three long whip-like branches growing out of the top and ending in three or four ribbons of leaves. The leaves were thick and firm to the touch like a palm frond. The trunks were thick in the middle, swollen up like a snake that has swallowed a goat, and bulged a bit at the top. The roots acted queerly, too, Blenkins noticed, for three main roots kept heaving up out of the earth, taking the trunk with them up into the air. Finally there they stood, each supported on three leg-like roots and with three arm-like branches trailing from the bulbous top. And toward the end of August all three started budding—huge cancerous - looking buds that glistened in the sunlight, oily as amontillado sherry in a glass.

"BLENKINS, of course, thought they would flower and every morning he used to pop out on the roof before breakfast to look at them, but the buds didn't seem to change any more. In fact the weeds — he called them trees, and they must have been that by now — the trees, then, seemed to have stopped growing altogether. For a week he kept expecting something new to happen, but it never did and he finally lost interest and went on with his drinking in a more serious way —making up for lost time, I expect. Crazy as a coot, I'd say, and drunk to boot. Didn't keep any servants — probably because he liked to do his drinking in private. He had a woman come in every week or so to wash dishes and clean up the apartment. Well, I take it he must have been doing some fancy drinking about then, but this is the story he told—believe it or not.

"One night in early September he was sitting in his living-room when he thought he heard a noise out on the roof. He listened carefully and couldn't hear anything more; decided he must have been mistaken. Besides, how could anything get up on his roof? There was a sheer wall all around it—a drop of fifty feet or more to the street. The only way out there was right through his living-room and out the French doors

that he had covered with heavy hangings to keep the draughts away. Any visitor that came through those doors would have to be able to climb like a fly, he thought, and smiled to himself.

"Just as he got feeling all comfortable again, he heard another sound outside — a thump. Couldn't be any mistake about it. Then he began to feel nervous. The janitor was down in the basement and if he shouted his head off no one could hear him. He remembered that he kept a .32 Colt automatic in the closet, though, and he started to get up out of the chair. Apparently he had more of a load aboard than he thought, for he made heavy weather of the course to the closet and his head was dizzy with the effort of thinking all of a sudden. But he got the gun and put it in his pocket and was wondering whether or not to try to get as far as the elevator outside and away to safety when . . . must have been a shock for the poor beggar," mused the Colonel and shook his head doubtfully.

"In Heaven's name!" I demanded, "what happened!" I don't believe I ever knew a more exasperating *raconteur*.

Colonel Marsh looked at me in mild surprise and for an instant I feared I should hear no more that evening. But fortunately he was not offended. "Knocks," he replied, "knocks on the glass doors hidden behind those great velvet curtains. Like this," and he struck the table three times slowly and impressively, and peered at me under his white eyebrows. "Must have been a shock to the chap!

"Blenkins could hardly believe his ears — wished he didn't have to, in fact. There was nobody outside on his roof. He knew it the way you know the world is round or that the sun will come up in the east tomorrow. But there had been three knocks or he was drunker than he ought to be — and as a matter fact, he could feel himself growing more sober every second. He stood there gawking at the curtains and fiddling with his pistol for a long time. He had begun to believe that perhaps he *had* been drunk, when the three slow knocks were repeated, firmly and unmistakably.

"Still he didn't move. He was thinking that since someone was really there, it must be a burglar — but since when have burglars knocked to announce themselves? A wild idea of aeorplanes went through his head, but his roof was small — couldn't land an autogyro on it these days. even, and in those days the Wright Brothers were still front page news. Of course he thought of ghosts, night-prowlers, werewolves, and such things, but only in a kind of vague panic. He says

he was almost ready to go to the doors and pull them open when he saw the knob begin to turn! Blenkins didn't breathe during the time it took for the catch to click and the door begin to push inward and when he saw what stood in the opening, framed by the light of the rising moon, he just gasped once and stopped breathing for another spell. There stood one of his strange trees, holding on to the knob with the long finger-like leaves at the end of one branch!

"HE'S NOT SURE just how long afterward he opened his eyes — probably a second or two — and saw all three of the creatures standing just inside the doorway quiet and terrifying. He says he knew at once that they were looking at him — could feel it — though it wasn't until the next day that he learned what wonderful organs of sight and hearing those ugly, sore-looking buds of theirs really were. He shut his eyes hard once more and opened them again, half hoping to banish the horrid sight — but there they stood, solid and real and one of them reached out a branch and the ribbony fingers touched a chair and felt over it as though exploring a new thing.

"Blenkins tried to speak, but his voice was hoarse and he croaked like a dying fish. Instantly one of the tree-creatures started making sounds with its roots. He finally got his throat clear and said 'What are you?' and 'Waa *aah roo*' came grunting out of those root — like an echo.

"The poor man gasped once more and sat down suddenly in a chair that stood behind him. His nerveless fingers still held on to the .32 but he had no will or strength left to think about weapons. It suddenly came to him that these trees could walk and see and — were actually imitating what he said! Intelligent trees — well, the man was drunk or crazy or both and trees are no worse than pink snakes, I suppose," said the Colonel. Then after a second's thought, "Yet, with it all, as I said before, I don't know whether to believe him or not. It's all so dam' plausible!

"He tried 'em out — talking, you know. 'Man,' he said, pointing to himself and all three croaked it after him. It was a bubbly, watery sort of voice they had, Blenkins told me. They made the noises through air holes in the base of their roots. 'Chair,' he said, pointing to the article which one of the creatures had been examining. 'Table,' 'floor,' 'walk,' 'light,' book' — he pointed out the meaning of each word and they watched him or examined the article with interest. Books

interested them most — they stopped the show, in fact. Blenkins had a haphazard library — every book he had ever read. Fairy tales and primers from his childhood and all. Those trees liked the primers and shared them between them and he couldn't get another word out of them. Then he felt weak all of a sudden but didn't dare go to his bedroom to lie down, so he took to the whisky bottle instead and he doesn't remember anything more of that weird night.

"But he remembers waking up the next morning, all right! An awful headache! A mouth like dry soap! He was lying on his own bed fully dressed and when he stood up to look at himself in the glass, he was shocked (so he says), to see that his hair was grayer than it had been the day before. Of course the first thing he did was to creep into his living room to see if the creatures were still there. The room was empty. However, it was simply littered with books. They lay on the floor, the table and the chairs by the dozen and all the lights were burning. The door to the roof was closed and it took a deal of courage for Blenkins to open it and look out. The first thing he saw were the three grotesque trees. But he wasn't in the least alarmed, for they were all three back in their places in the box of earth with their roots firmly in the ground! So he'd imagined the whole thing!"

"You mean that's the end of the story?" I protested.

"Nonsense!" snapped the worthy Colonel. "Can't you keep quiet a minute?

"HE FELT as if an enormous load had been lifted from his mind, Blenkins said. He walked over and patted those thick five-foot trunks to reassure himself and stood breathing the crisp autumn morning. What a fool he was making of himself, drinking away his life! He'd go out at once — have breakfast in a good restaurant and spend the day looking up some of his old friends. He bathed and changed his clothes and slipped out to the elevator, almost not daring to look into the livingroom. He didn't take a drop to drink that whole day and returned, about five in the afternoon, feeling like a new man. He entered the living room thinking to himself that he might even go out to dinner, rather than cook and eat his meal all by himself. And then he noticed the floor — not only books were littered there, but *earth!*

" 'Good God!' he said and stepped back, all his horrors of the night before vividly recalled to mind. And as he spoke, the light darkened at the glass doors and he glanced up start-

led to see the three trees entering the room solemnly in single file. He says that their main roots bent like knees and the tangle of smaller rootlets slopped down soddenly as they walked, like a forkful of hay.

" 'Welcome back, man!' said the first tree and 'welcome' echoed the other two as they stood in a line looking at him.

" 'What . . . who are . . . I've gone off my head!' muttered poor Blenkins, feeling the sweat start coldly down his forehead.

"Have you no greeting to exchange for ours?" asked one of the Things.

" 'Are you really *talking*?' he gasped.

" 'Of course! Cannot you hear us? But of course you do not doubt your aural senses; you perhaps mean to indicate that you are surprised. You need not be. Your books last night were well enough arranged to teach us how to communicate with you. Your language is quite simple, real ly. We were thoroughly competent in it long before your star appeared.'

" 'Books . . . language . . .. simple! But . . . I *can't* be imagining this . . . it was true last night, then! But you are speaking *English!* And last night you were just beginning to learn words!'

" 'I have just finished saying that your books were well adapted to teaching us how to speak as you do — it was quite simple and we had the whole night in which to do it. Are you so surprised?'

"Blenkins looked from one to the other and shuddered at the grotesque and intelligent buds that corruscated oilily at the top of the bulbous bodies. The long snake-like leaves wriggled and twisted almost continually and as each spoke, there was a fat blubbery smacking ong the roots of of the ipod legs — like the sound gas bubbles rising in a se r. His mind reeled.

" hat . . . who . . . what sort of Thing *are* you?' he whispered painfully

" 'We are vegeatbles, in your language. Possibly trees, though we cannot be sure. Your books seem to describe only the lower orders of vegetable life. Possibly we are animals. When we had been through the small primers and others of your books we found the dictionary; which was most thorough and helpful All three of us read this through page by page last night. Animals seem, according to the dictionary, to be many things — but active and sentient, as distinguished from the vegetables. We are active and sentient, yet the pictures of animals seem quite different from us, and many of the vegetables look somewhat like

us — so we are uncertain as to our status.'

"At this point Blenkins pressed his hands to his head in despair. 'I must have a drink after all, he said as he poured a stiff one.

" 'You're trees,' he said at last, slowly and firmly as though he would force them to act the part. 'You're trees — vegetables — and you shouldn't be intelligent — you shouldn't be able to talk, nor even to walk around out of the earth. What does it all mean?'

" 'Ah! It is as I suggested,' put in another of the Things. It might be easier if I mention now that later on Blenkins gave them names. One was browner than the other two, who were rather gray of bark, and this one Blenkins called Brownie. Of the other two, the one who had just spoken stood only five feet high on his three roots, as compared to the others' six or six and a half feet of stature. This one he mentally referred to as Shorty. The third, who seemed to do most of the talking, he had nicknamed the Babbler.

"Brownie and the Babbler were silent and Shorty continued speaking. 'It seemed to me that this planet was strange. There are then no intelligent vegetables at all here?'

" 'Intelligent vegetables! What are you talking about?'

" 'I am talking about trees and shrubs and plants — in fact about vegetables that may be intelligent. But surely you understand your own language?'

"BLENKINS SAID that they seemed only able to understand literal meanings. Tone of voice meant nothing to them. Everything he told them, moreover, as he soon learned, was believed absolutely and completely. The very idea of saying what was not true had never seemed to have occurred to them, and these two facts made the conversations he held with them difficult at times.

" 'Of course I understand the words,' answered Blenkins. 'What I meant was that there are no vegetables like you anywhere. Such things have never been heard of nor imagined. I do not understand how you can possibly talk or walk — or see or hear, for that matter.'

" 'We do these things in much the same way as you,' answered the Babbler after a pause. 'We walk on our roots, as you see.'

"But . . . how can you move them? And — oh, there are so many crazy points about it! — trees usually die if their roots are taken out of the earth.'

" 'Even when they are not feeding?'

" 'But they always *are* feeding — except in winter, perhaps.' "

" 'And in winter?' "

" 'Yes . . . I suppose that is true. We can take a tree out of the ground in winter and even keep it stored in a shed until spring without killing it. But it isn't winter.'

" 'Our feeding period is evidently not the same as with your trees here. We feed only while the star shines.'

" 'The star! There are a million shining outside,' for it had grown dark.

" 'I mean your star — the sun, you call it. We feed only during the day. At night we are active, Your trees are active, I suppose, only in the winter.' "

" 'No, no! They are *never* active. They have no muscles to move with. Winter and summer, day and night, they remain in one spot from the day they sprout to the day they die. That is what makes it seem so strange for you to be here . . . walking around.'

" 'But how do *you* walk? The tissue cells contract powerfully making one side of your leg shorter than the other, thus moving the entire limb. It is precisely the same with us. These native trees you mention must be very low in evolution. We must be animals, after all. What makes you think us trees?'

" 'Your whole appearance . . . besides you grew from seeds. I planted the seeds myself in that box outside. You are trees. all right. That's the only one thing I *am* sure of any longer."

" 'As for our talking,' put in Shorty methodically, "the air-vents in our roots form words as easily as your mouth seems to.'

" 'And our outward organ,' added Brownie, pointing to the sticky bud with an upward flung leaf-finger, 'sees and hears as well or better than your eyes and ears combined.'

" 'But after all, it is our place to be curious — not yours,' said the Babbler. 'We are the explorers on a strange planet. You must tell us about yourself. When do you eat . . . and how, for I see that your roots are short and small!' He pointed at Blenkins' feet as he spoke.

" 'I . . . I'll have to have another drink,' said poor Blenkins. After a moment he tried to begin an explanation that would satisfy them. 'Trees have roots and live in the earth. They feed on . . . I don't know exactly . . .'

" 'Sunlight and the salts in earth moisture,' put in Brownie. 'Go on.'

" 'Well . . . animals have no roots at all. They live on food like . . . well, cows eat grass, for instance; dogs eat bones and meat; I eat bread and meat and eggs and such things. Animals eat things with their mouths — chew 'em up and

swallow them — and their stomachs digest them. Trees haven't any mouths or stomachs. That's the big difference . . . but what do you mean when you say you are on a strange planet?'

" 'FIRST THINGS come first,' replied the Babbler. 'I begin to understand. Animals are in reality parasites who can support life only on other life. You eat meat — that is, dead animal life — and bread, which is dead vegetable life. Trees and other vegetables are not parasites, but true life. They do not have to kill in order to live, as you do. Their food comes from the sun and the earth.'

" 'It is a new thing,' put in Shorty. 'Such a warped and evil form of existence has not been found anywhere else in the Universe.'

" 'It is evil,' agreed Brownie.

" 'But look at the results,' put in Blenkins, thoroughly warmed by his last drink. 'Without animals there could never have been men.' And he drew himself up proudly and reached for the bottle, only to misjudge his balance and tumble out of his chair onto the floor.

"The tree creatures looked at him a moment in sober silence. 'You did not even know what food trees live upon,' suggested the Babbler. 'You seem intelligent, but strangely uninformed.'

" 'Ah, but I am not a botanist,' answered Blenkins. 'This is the age of specialization. One man knows only one subject.'

" 'But your ancestors — some of them at least — must have known botany.'

" 'What has that to do with me?'

" 'You have, of course, all the knowledge and experience of your ancestors stored in your mind.'

" 'Nonsense! Who ever heard of such a thing!' exclaimed Blenkins.

" 'I do not understand. Did you not hear my words?'

" 'I mean, what our ancestors knew has died with them.'

" 'This is extraordinary! Do you have to learn all your facts over again each time a child is born?'

" 'Why, of course! How else can anyone learn?'

" 'Among us,' remarked Shorty quietly, 'we emerge from the seed with a precise memory of every thought that ever passed through the minds of our ancestors. I understand now, however, why you have so many books. It is to preserve the thoughts of one generation so that the next may learn them quickly.'

" 'THESE MEN are very poorly constructed and their intelligence is an inefficient

thing,' spoke up the tree he referred to as Brownie.

" 'They are perhaps hardly worth our further study, after all,' agreed the Babbler. 'Our course for the future seems fairly simple. Nevertheless, this man here has done service in caring for our seeds. If there are further things he wishes to know, I will take the time to discuss them with him.'

"At this, the other two turned and began looking among the books until they found a geography. This they brought under a light and leaned over it intently. Blenkins said that they went through it at a furious rate of speed — five or ten seconds sufficing for them to memorize a page of type or an entire map. It was at this time that he began to realize how infinitely above his own intelligence these creatures towered. He began asking questions of the Babbler and succeeded in obtaining a complete explanation of their existence here. When we had achieved this, he says, he could not help feeling that the human race was doomed.

"Roughly speaking, this is the story of the tree-creatures, which, according to Blenkins, he put together after a dozen conversations at various times. There are, it appears, many other planets similar to ours circling other suns. Life is very common on them. However, these planets are not in our universe, but a distant one — for all the stars in the sky are only the separate parts of one universe out of perhaps countless millions of universities. 'Life' as it is known on these planets is entirely vegetable. There are hundreds of types of vegetable life — hundreds of thousands of species and varieties — but of them all only one has ever developed intelligence. This breed is that of the tree-men who were sharing his roof-garden.

"As to how they ever got here, it appears that they propagate by seed and that this seed has the property of great tolerance to extremes of heat and cold. When a planet becomes sufficiently populated, these creatures construct a large gun and fill a shell with seed which is shot violently out into space and bursts. Thereupon the millions of seeds are scattered at cosmic speed and spread out through space, never stopping until they by chance actually collide with some celestial body or enter its sphere of gravitational influence. Should they land on a star, of course they are instantly consumed with the heat. Should they land on a planet without the proper natural condition for the support of their form of life, naturally enough they never sprout. By far the greater num-

ber of such broadcast seeds never touch star or planet but merely continue through an eternity of space — potential life destined to remain forever dormant.

"It's a strange idea," commented Colonel Marsh. I thought of some of our own seed pods that explode violently to throw seeds great distances through the air. Even our native pine cones are miniature broadcasters. But I remained silent for fear of stopping the flow of narrative.

"But the most sensational part of it all is that when this seed landed on an agreeable planet and sprouted into a tree, the creature was instantly intelligent, educated, and trained by instinct — guided by a share in the racial brain — a brain million of years old, wise and capable. Gad! What we humans could do with such a gift!

"THE MEMORY of these particular three tree-men went back to a vague and misty past — billions of years ago. The most recent thing they remembered was life on a crowded planet circling a twin sun — one yellow and the other a dwarf red, soon to be cold. Research in science was carried on here — that seemed to be all they lived for. Then came the construction of the colonizing artillery and they remembered nothing more. The Babbler told Blenkins that at least a hundred thousand light-years must have been crossed in their travels to this solar system and that their speed through space might average less than one-ten-thousandth of the speed of light. Fancy that! One billion years just for the voyage! Of course they remember nothing of the time they spent in the seed stage.

"With an intelligence of that sort, learning a language in one evening was child's play, as Blenkins soon realized. The creatures had no language of their own that he could understand, though he got some vague idea that they read each other's mind-vibrations with their roots. It seems that they must spend half of their time rooted in the earth and holding their leaves up to the rays of the sun. Otherwise they would suffer from malnutrition. But during this feeding period their roots are able to vibrate in the earth in a way that translates ideas as quickly as thought can originate them. Talking English made Brownie and Shorty impatient, it was so slow and cumbersome a means of conveying information. But the Babbler seemed to like it, told Blenkins he did, in fact. He explained that his thoughts were slower than those of his companions and he liked the extra time in-

volved in their translation by voice.

"Well, that's enough of an interruption for explanations," said the Colonel. "That first night of conversation with the Babbler, Blenkins did not go to bed at all. Once he got used to the shocking idea that such creatures could exist at all, his brain took fire from the heady nature of what he learned. Here was matter, he thought, to startle the world wide awake! He pictured the headlines in the newspapers and grinned to himself. Just before dawn he began to get the idea that these tree-men were masters of enough new and revolutionary inventions in mechanics and biology to change the face of human existence and then he got so excited that he found himself drinking bottle after bottle of liquor and remaining sober throughout."

Colonel Marsh was silent a moment. "Chap must have had an inexhaustible cellar!" he decided, with a vaguely envious tone of voice.

"The Babbler had asked him why men preferred to eat other life instead of obtaining their food directly from sunlight.

"'Why, merely because we don't know how to make food from sunlight,' he answered, surprised. 'Don't you suppose we'd stop raising animals for food — or growing wheat — if we could make food artificially in a factory? Of course we would. It'd be cheaper.'

"Shorty and Brownie looked up. 'But how very simple! That can be shown you.'

"They showed him, too. At least he feels sure that what they told him would work as a process. But, of course, he didn't understand a word of it all. He wasn't a chemist, he explained.

"'Another specialized knowledge?' asked Shorty.

"Yes . . . I could get a chemist here, perhaps . . .'

"'No,' replied Brownie. 'This is childish talk. Vegetables, says his dictionary, are not sentient. They, however, have mastered the principal formula necessary to life on planets. This man — and all other men — are parasites, lacking the intelligence to solve that simple problem. What can their chemists know? Besides, their books speak too much of things we do not understand — love and hate and murder and war and mercy — what are these things?'

"BLENKINS WAS silent a moment, hoping to think of some way to persuade them to write out the formula.

"'What do they mean by art and music, for that matter?' put in Shorty.

"'Art — why that is making beautiful pictures. Here, like this.' And he brought out a book filled with color reproductions of paintings. The three tree-

men bent over it silently and the Babbler handed it back to Blenkins. 'They do not seem very accurate pictures,' he remarked.

"'It's not their accuracy — it's the color and the form and . . . well, of course, I'm not an artist.'

"'Just what *is* your own specialty?' asked Shorty.

"Blenkins, of course, had none and said so. He felt the absurdity of his position keenly. But, as he asked me, who could have told when he was a boy how important it might be to him to enlarge his education? Up in his cabin in the north woods he now has a fine science library — seems to have studied the volumes in it, too. But that didn't help him then.

"'Anyway,' he said to Shorty, '*music* you should be able to understand. I've a phonograph and you can hear some. Art . . . well, art's different. Perhaps ordinary photographs are better than paintings from some points of view. But music . . .' And they spent the rest of the time until dawn broke listening to phongraph records. The three tree-men said they had never heard any sounds like it before. Shorty decided that the vibrations per second were related mathematically and counted them (apparently their strange bodies needed no instruments to help in such research). The Babbler preferred dance music, but was interested in Wagner. Shorty neither liked nor disliked — merely counted and noted effects. Brownie said that the sounds made his roots tingle and went out to watch the dawn come up, where he was presently joined by the other two. Blenkins saw them climb onto the great box and start wriggling their roots into the earth. In a few minutes they were motionless, standing as they had stood for weeks — looking like freaks of nature, but nothing more. He himself was suddenly struck yawning and staggered to his bedroom where he slept until late afternoon.

"When Blenkins stood, still yawning, on his roof, the three vegetables were back in the box of earth, leaves rustling slightly in the breeze. He spoke to them and received no answer and then felt the Babbler's nearest leaves, only to have them writhe away from out of his hand. He stood then for a time looking down upon the street over the balustrade and thinking. If he could learn how to make artificial food he would be a millionaire — that much was certain. If he could in some way keep these creatures to himself there was no telling what new inventions he might not obtain from them. He would patent the valuable ones and be the most famous inventor in human history. After all, these things

— brainy enough — were only vegetables. There must be some way to control them. Why not try heavy rope or chain? On the other hand, might he not do best for himself by merely announcing his discovery to science — let people who knew more than he did handle the whole affair? Discoverer of a new genus — it might be named after him — Blenkinsi, or no — Blenkinsiana, perhaps.

"And while he leaned there, thinking, he heard a noise behind him and turned to see the three creatures pulling their roots out of the earth, shaking them delicately, and stepping down from the box to the roof itself. The sun had set.

"'WE HAVE decided that your art and music are merely clever methods of wasting time,' announced the Babbler at once. Blenkins merely gaped without answering.

"'And that all parasitical forms of life are evil — dangerous,' added Shorty.

"'You mean men as well?' asked Blenkins, not yet understanding.

"'Of course! We shall colonize your planet and then things will be very much improved.'

"'But won't you take up a great deal of land — a colony of you?'

"'We shall require the entire planet in a few years. Until that time you men and your other forms of life here are welcome to use it.'

"'Welcome to use it!' Blenkins exclaimed, somewhat nettled at the nonchalant dismissal of the human race. 'Suppose *you* are not permitted to do this colonizing?'

"'Really,' answered the tree-creature he called Brownie, 'this is not edifying. How shall these men prevent us? We are stronger and are more intelligent.'

"By this time Blenkins had fortified himself with a drink or two, as I gather. For some reason he lost control of himself completely and rushed, red-faced, to seize the nearest thing with which to strike at the speaker. It chanced to be a stout steel poker from the great fireplace that faced the doors to the roof. This he brandished and shouted, 'I am a man and I do not permit you!' and then he cursed them and struck at Brownie with his weapon. Up flashed one of the arms and the long green finger-leaves seized the poker in an overpowering grasp and wrenched it from him. Another arm was brought to bear upon the piece of metal and, Blenkins says, the tree-beast proceeded calmly and quietly to bend the half-inch bar into the form of a narrow spiral. 'You see our strength,' it said and dropped the twisted metal on the floor where it rang like a gong. Then the three of them

started out the door without a word.

"Blenkins does not pretend to apologize for his next action," said Colonel Marsh. "He was savage with too little sleep and too much alcohol. The gesture of the sentient vegetable seemed suddenly a last intolerable insult. His hatred welled up inside him like a red tide and he pounced upon the table drawer, drew out the automatic, and fired two shots into the back of the Babbler.

"The sharp crash of sound seemed to sober him suddenly and he stood still while the three creatures turned and came back to him. 'You see,' he muttered unsteadily, 'we men have other means of strength than our mere muscles.'

"The three trees stood in a row looking at him, but in complete silence. Blenkins noticed that the Babbler had two holes through his trunk and that a thick yellow liquor oozed out of each and dripped greenly down on the floor. To this the tree paid no attention and in a few seconds the flow had ceased and the wounds glistened stickily. The silent regard of the creatures was more than he could bear. He was in an agony of fear — certain that all three would seize and kill him at once. Sweat stood beaded heavily on his forehead and 'Damn you—oh *damn* you!' he shrieked. 'Kill me if you can!' He brandished the automatic once more, his arm suddenly trembling wildly. Then the Babbler spoke. His voice was quiet and full of the utmost calm.

"'A singular happening,' he said. 'Tell me, man, how was it the part of wisdom to do that? It seems to me to have been ill advised.'

"'You . . . you are going to kill all the animals on Earth!'

"'And what of it?'

"'What of it! Why, only that we will kill you first!'

"'But surely that form of life which is most intelligent is entitled to exist in the place of those less well fitted for life?'

"'We are as well — better fitted than you!'

"BUT WE shall not destroy animals violently — that is a savage act. We shall merely occupy the land to the exclusion of the animals, a very different thing. Moreover, your intelligence cannot be high. Indeed it is so low that we do not fear the worst you can do. You must have known that you have no power — even with that explosive missile, pistol you call it — to destroy us. You should have refrained from the attempt, knowing its absurdity. Were you more dangerous, we should take steps to prevent you from harming us. As it is — you can see that my sap has ceased to waste away. In an hour the bark will have begun to heal.'

"Blenkins felt a wave of relief that he would not be punished. He had instant recourse to the bottle of liquor and succeeded in quieting his nerves with a pint of the raw stuff. All that night he sat there, sipping at it, and the tree-creatures moved quietly about the apartment conversing, perhaps, but silently. When dawn came, Brownie approached him and silently seized his arms. He found himself propelled toward his bedroom and pushed inside, where he heard the door being closed and fastened behind him. Too stupefied to care, he flung himself on the bed and fell into a profound sleep. It was late afternoon when he awoke and, being hungry, tried to open the door. But it was securely fastened and he fell prey to a thousand imaginations and fears. Then he heard scuffling roots on the floor outside and the door was opened.

"'You may come out,' announced Brownie, and turned away.

"Blenkins slipped into the kitchen and fried eggs and bacon and toasted some bread. After he had eaten, he felt much better. He was thoroughly ashamed of the scene he had made the night before and determined to make every possible effort to obtain information on the making of artificial food from the tree-men. As he entered the living-room, Brownie stood between him and the outer hallway of the apartment, as though to prevent his escape.

"'I am a prisoner, then?' asked Blenkins.

"'Yes. It is possible that many men together might destroy us. We do not wish this to happen until we have seeded and planted the seeds which are to form our future colony.'

"'You need have no fear,' said Blenkins in a mournful tone of voice. 'I am very sorry for what happened last night — I must have taken too much to drink. I wish to apologize to the tree I wounded.'

"'No necessity for that. We knew very well that your action was not intelligent — that is to say, that it was not meant.'

"'Then I am forgiven?'

"'You have done no harm — what is there to forgive? If you mean that there may be no consequences of your action harmful to you, I can assure you there will be none. You must not leave this place until we have gone. That is all.'

"Blenkins poured himself a drink and swallowed it.

"'Why do you poison yourself so much with that liquid?' enquired Brownie. 'You claim to have intelligence — that is not an intelligent action.'

"Blenkins mumbled an excuse and all his hatred of these cold superior creatures returned with tenfold force — but a quiet hatred this time. 'If you would

seek to make us perfect, you would help me to understand how to prepare synthetic food from sunlight,' he said. 'I could write it all down if you would explain it slowly.'

"THE BABBLER entered the room at this point and Brownie turned to him. 'If you wish you might try to explain how to live to this parasite,' he said. 'I have no more time to waste on him.'

"'Why, very well,' answered the tree spoken to. 'Get paper and pencil, man. First it is necessary that you have a complicated organic substance similar to the green stuff your dictionary calls chlorophyll. Then you must have a constant supply of water with salts in solution, carbon, and other substances. Finally you must expose your chemical to sunlight. Now have you that all down . . . and is it clear to you?'

"'Yes, yes!' exclaimed Blenkins frantically writing. 'Go on!'

"'Now for the particulars — first the containers for all these. They should be rock crystal for the chlorophyll and some opaque substance for the salt solution — stone or wood or metal, it does not matter. The crystal vessel should be shallow and fed from beneath by the liquid, rising under pressure. The product of the photosynthesis should escape at the sides of the crystal chamber in the form of liquid or semi - solid carbohydrates. Have you got that?

"'Now there must be a positive method of floating off these carbohydrates constantly as they are formed; there must be a means devised for making this chlorophyll-like substance; there must be some way of preparing the inorganic liquid which is the raw material of our factory. Note those points down and we will take them up one after the other. I find I must again consult your dictionary, for though the ideas I wish to express are extremely simple to me. your language is not designed for their easy expression.'

"Thereupon he proceeded to leaf over the pages for a few minutes. 'This is very stupid!' he exclaimed and leafed some more. 'No, it is not here. I did not remember it.'

"Blenkins was watching in an agony of apprehension. 'What is the trouble?' he enquired at length.

"'Only that your language is apparently incapable of scientific ideas,' answered the grotesque creature. 'I am very much afraid it will be impossible to explain the process to you after all.'

"'Ah, but that is not a complete dictionary — it is an abridged one.'

"'What, another of your specializations?'

"'Pretty much so. A chemical dictionary would give you all

the words you need — if I could only go out and purchase one. . . . I'd be back in ten minutes,' he pleaded recklessly.

"'What you ask is quite impossible.'

"'Moreover,' put in a new voice, 'it is quite useless. These men are not destined to last long enough on this planet to make it worth while to even begin their education. We are now ready to commence preparations for our departure and in another few months we shall have planted millions of our seed all over Earth. In another year each of those millions will be as we are and will have seeded in turn their millions of millions.'

"BLENKINS TURNED to see Brownie standing in the doorway. Shorty behind him. At the sudden picture these words presented in his mind, he found his knees weaken and his resolution and ambition turned to water. He drank a glass of whisky and sat down in a chair.

"'How will you leave this roof,' he asked fearfully.

"We shall fly. We do not believe that even if all the animals in the street below should band together they could prevent our walking through them. Nevertheless, that would be a slow and foolish method of locomotion.'

"'Fly!' exclaimed Blenkins looking around the room. 'How will you build your machine?'

"'We need none. We shall spend a few days rooted in the soil and grow wings. At the same time, we shall mature our seed, so that when we are ready to depart, we shall have the purpose at hand. The only thing lacking is this, man. The earth out in those boxes is poor and the water supply insufficient for our purpose. We shall not permit you to leave, but that machine on the desk which your dictionary describes and pictures is a telephone and you must speak on it and have fresh soil brought up for our use.

"'You will have it brought tomorrow. The — I believe they are called peasants, or perhaps farm laborers — at all events, the men who bring it shall place it upon the roof and depart. You will be in your room and they must be told that you are not to be disturbed, also that we are valuable and exotic vegetables which must not be harmed. When they have left the new earth, they must go away at once. Then we will release you from your bedroom.'

"'When you give your instructions over the telephone we shall stand beside you and see that you say only what we have directed you to say,' put in the third of the tree-men. Then all three stood still and stared at Blenkins.

"'But they won't leave it until they are paid — I must be

here to give them money,' he protested.

"'According to your books, money is only a promise to pay. You can promise them to pay when you are speaking over this instrument.'

"Blenkins laughed hollowly and pulled a bill from his wallet. 'See here! It is a promise to pay — yes! But it must be signed by the Secretary of the Treasury of this country. It has to be on this kind of paper.'

"'Very well. You will leave some of these papers on this table beside the telephone where the workmen can take them in payment for the earth. Now there must be no more objections. Take up the telephone and say what you have been told!'

"'But — oh this is absurd! It is after five o'clock. All the stores are closed. Besides, come to think of it, I never heard of a store that sold earth. I don't think there is one in the whole of New York City.' He opened a cabinet which housed the telephone books and picked up the Red Book and began searching through it, but without success. 'I might try some of these Garden Supply numbers — or perhaps Nurserymen . . . but they'll all be closed now.'

"'Try one,' commanded Brownie. And at random, Blenkins selected a number and dialed it. There was no answer to the first long ring and Blenkins would have hung up, but was prevented by a green and muscular finger-leaf. Then to his surprise a voice answered. Earth? No, they didn't carry it. No. Not in New York City. Have to get it from out of town. Take a week. Wouldn't manure do? Well, manure was available by the ton. Yes, could be delivered tomorrow afternoon early.

"Blenkins glanced up hopelessly at the tree-men leaning over him. 'Will you be there another five minutes,' he enquired. 'Good. Then I'll call you right back.' He hung up.

"'CAN'T BUY earth,' he explained. 'But they have manure to sell. Wouldn't that do just as well? It could be mixed with the earth in the boxes and the resulting soil should be rich enough.'

"'Manure?' asked Shorty. 'That is an excretion from animals, is it not? What use would that be? It sounds rather disgusting.'

"'But . . . it's what we use for our very finest gardens! It makes plants grow better than anything we have ever found — much better than plain earth!" expostulated Blenkins. 'Besides, I can get it for you easily — all put up in bags. Earth would take a week to get here. Suit yourself!'

"'Of course, we cannot tell until we see it — but perhaps it

will do. I think we should try it anyway. If it is not suitable, we will have to wait for earth, that is all. Order some.'

"'How much do you want?'

"'How shall I answer — in size or in weight? I am not able to give the weight, but in size — enough to fill those boxes.'

"'Well, they're two feet square and six feet long — say three square yards each. You'll want about nine yards of manure and the man said that a ton was a yard — that's nine tons! At fifty dollars a ton for the stuff delivered — why that's four hundred and fifty dollars! I haven't that much money with me,' and he shut his lips obstinately. 'Besides, why should I give you all that money — just so you can take the world away from me and my kind? No, sir, I won't do it.'

"'This is very trying' remarked Brownie, reaching forth an arm and seizing Blenkins by the neck. 'I must force you by intimidation, I can see. You fear bodily harm — we have all noticed it. Therefore you will either do this or suffer bodily harm. It is very simple.' He released his grip and Blenkins slumped back in his seat moistly and poured a drink with trembling fingers.

"'All right,' he whispered and then cleared his throat. 'All right, I'll do it. They'll take my check — I can mail them the check and order tonight and they'll deliver the stuff tomorrow. Let me up.'

"Feverishly he hunted for his check book, his pen, an envelope, and a stamp. When he had sealed the letter (not before Brownie had made him show it) he asked if it would be all right for him to step into the hall and mail it.

"'I will go with you,' said Brownie, and seized his arm with those thick long leaves that gripped so tightly Blenkins said he still had the marks to show. The mail chute was beside the elevator and Blenkins despairingly hoped that by a miracle the elevator might ascend and the operator see him. But there were no other apartments on the roof and he almost never had a visitor. They dropped the letter and returned, Brownie still holding firmly to his arm. Once inside, the treeman let go and Blenkins tottered to the table and to further draughts of liquid courage. Feeling rather better after an hour or so, he endeavored to make conversation with the Babbler and asked him how he could grow wings.

"'Very simply,' was the reply, 'by wishing to!'

"Blenkins was in no state of mind to understand such a cryptic remark and asked for further enlightenment.

"'Why, it is related, in a manner of speaking, to the thing your books call creative

evolution. Are you unable to change your form?'

" 'Change our form? No man can do that — can you?'

" 'That is what I am talking about, you stupid animal! Of course, the changed form must be in relation to what already exists. I cannot grow four arms only three. I cannot change my fingers in number. But as for their shape, there is nothing easier. In order to fly we will our fingers to become broad and flat so that instead of three arms and hands we have three wings with which to beat the air. You will see it all . . . . but no, I had forgotten our new plan. You will not see it.'

"BLENKINS LICKED his lips and his throat felt suddenly dry with a new fear. 'Why . . . why not . . . why won't I see it?

" 'Because you will be shut up in your room during the few days we require to grow wings.'

" 'Oh!' Blenkins felt relieved but with a queer sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. This, then, was the beginning of the end for the human race. Once the manure had arrived he would be shut up and unable to do anything. These nightmare creatures would fly over the world and plant a million seeds each. Men would never be able to find them until they commenced to sprout next year. And by that time it would be too late — besides, three million of the things, scattered through the jungles and the forests of the north! No, the end of his race was in plain sight. Being the sort of man he was, his first thought was to reach for the bottle. In an hour he cared nothing for what might happen to anyone. The Babbler helped him to bed and he did not even hear the door fastened on him.

"He awoke with a splitting headache and a mouth that felt like flannel. The window of his bedroom looked across two flat roofs at a tall building a block away. The sun shone flatly against the red brick of it and he realized that it was mid-afternoon. He would not be allowed to leave his room until the tree-creatures came down from their box of earth with the evening and unlocked his door. He turned over to try to sleep some more, but could not, so he rose and took a long, hot shower and felt much better. It was still not yet four o'clock when he had finished and then, to his surprise, he heard the door being unfastened. A sudden great hope rose in him. The workmen, perhaps, were here with the manure and . . . the door opened to reveal Babler's fantastic form.

" 'The new earth has arrived,' said the creature. 'You

must show us how it is used. Come.'

"On the roof was a very respectable pile of manure — blackish brown and with little odor, for it had been well rotted. 'Uusually,' said Blenkins, 'it is mixed with the earth.'

" 'In what proportions?'

"Blenkins, of course, knew next to nothing of gardening. But he was so ashamed of being forced constantly to admit his ignorance that this time he tightened his lips confidently. 'Half and half!' he stated.

"The Babbler, meanwhile, had thrust a tentative rootlet into the mass and was wriggling it around there. By degrees he proceeded until his roots were entirely immersed in it.

" 'This is very extraordinary!' he exclaimed. 'It is perfectly delicious. I'm in favor of not bothering to mix it with earth at all.'

"Brownie and Shorty cautiously tested the manure. Brownie withdrew his roots after a minute or two. 'It may be poisonous — though I admit it gives the proper reactions. But it is so quick-acting. Come, let us withdraw for a time and observe its effects, for they puzzle me.'

"Shorty withdrew slowly. 'It's great stuff! So this is a product of animal life — perhaps we will let some animals share the planet with us after all! Which are the animals that produce this particular manure, man?'

"Blenkins' jaw dropped with surprise. 'Horses and, er — cows, I believe.'

" 'And do men value their manure?'

" 'Yes . . . for growing plants. Makes 'em grow better than anything.'

" 'Ah!" remarked Brownie, the doubter. 'You mean the plants that you grow for your food? Well . . . perhaps that is a sufficient answer.'

"All this while the Babbbler had been trying to get his roots out. At last he succeeded and fell down heavily on the roof. He rose to his roots again unsteadily. "Markable!' said he. 'Very sticky stuff . . . shticky . . . very, very 'markable. What do you others think?

" 'What is the matter with you?'

"The Babbler had by now got himself more in hand. 'Manure clings to the roots. I was well embedded. Besides, the sun is still shining and it makes me dizzy to miss my full day's feeding.'

" 'Well . . . let us all try the new manure for the remainder of the day. Tonight we will decide if any harmful results are apparent and, if not, we will go into our seeding and wing-growing tomorrow.'

"As he spoke, he was clumping methodically into the center of the fragrant pile and the

other two were beside him. Blenkins waited until all was quiet and then took a step backward, wondering if his moment for escape had come. But like a whiplash, a long green leaf caught at his waist and drew him back.

" 'You stay here!' said the Babbler. "We'll not be long — only until the sun sh-s-sets. Besides I want to thank you — we *all* thank you — for this mosht delish-sh-sh . . . for this *manure!*" and he swayed his thick bulged trunk solemnly and catching at Blenkins' hand with an extended leaf began to shake it up and down and sideways in what he may have believed to be the human fashion of expressing thanks.

"'NOW YOU KNOW," said Colonel Marsh, "this fellow Blenkins would be considered a nobody. He had money, of course, but no knowledge of art or science to amount to anything. Yet all the while he was possessed of a profound knowledge which he had never realized he possessed. He was a learned specialist in one subject — perhaps there was no greater in all of New York in those days. To this hidden talent the human race may easily owe its present existence. For Blenkins knew all the symptoms of intoxication as few men have ever known anything.

"It's curious," continued the Colonel, "that at the right moment fate sends the right man to meet any given situation. Suppose a great chemist had been in Blenkins' shoes. It's true he might have learned the secrets that he has been searching for all his life in the laboratory. But would that have prevented these tree-beasts from over-running the earth? Not at all! No, sir, a great specialist was needed and there he was — Blenkins. And after one wide-eyed stare at the Babbler, he *knew!* Here was something he was capable of handling. He warmly pressed the Thing's out-stretched leaf and climbed up beside him on the manure.

" 'That's fine!' he exclaimed in comradely tones. 'But let me get my fee — er, my *roots* in the stuff, too.' He wriggled his feet about as he spoke until his bedroom slippers were fouled with the mess. 'It certainly *is* good, all right, all right isn't it, old fellow?"

'Besht thing I yev-yev . . . ever! All due to amanmas — no thass no' ri' — *an-i-mals.* You are animal, too. All animals — all making manure for vegetables . . . great . . .h'mm . . . h'mmmm . . . mmmm . . .'

"Blenkins wondered hopefully, but did not dare move yet.

" 'NOT MUCH MORE sun-

light today,' he ventured. There was no answer. He pressed his hand around the leaf that gripped it and there was a faint answering pressure. Then the leaf slipped and fell away limply. He carefully loosened the one that gripped his waist and it too fell and hung beside the motionless trunk. Then, hardly daring to breathe, Blenkins withdrew first one foot and then the other, leaving the ruined shoes in place, and slopped down from the manure pile in his socks. Still there was silence and he turned and, white-faced now, raced to the door and the hall outside.

"Frantically he pressed the elevator button and after what seemed many ages the face of the operator showed. 'You're quite a stranger, Misteer Blenkins,' said he. Blenkins pushed in, breathlessly.

" 'Down! Quick!' he said. The operator seemed to be sniffing in a puzzled manner. When they reached the ground floor he turned to Blenkins. 'You haven't any boots on, sir,' he remarked in shocked tones. 'And your feet . . . that is . . . they're *dirty*, sir!' "

"Blenkins scarcely heard him. Open the door quick!' he exclaimed. 'Those trees may start after me any minute! Man! This is life or death!'

" 'But, you can't go out on the street that way . . . *oh!*' and suddenly the operator grinned and opened the door. Blenkins rushed out across the hall toward the door. The doorman was staring at him as he approached, but dividing his attention with something the elevator operator was trying to signal to him by tipping his head back and holding his hand as though it held a glass. The doorman was a slow thinking person. Here was Mr. Blenkins without shoes, his clothes in disarray, wild-eyed, and his trousers and socks slimy with filth. There remained his duty, and he moved forward his whole two hundred pounds to its performance.

" 'I'm sorry, sir,' he said. 'We can't let you go out that way. You will have to go back to your apartment and dress properly. Here, Bates, you keep your eye on the door as much as you can and I'll go up with Mr. Blenkins.'

"For a minute Blenkins struggled wildly, but he was a baby in those great hands and, half-dragged and half-carried, he found himself back in the elevator, shot up to the roof, and stood in front of the apartment door. His well-meaning captor started to feel in his pockets for keys, but Blenkins in an agony of desperation, pulled these forth unaided and unlatched the door.

" 'All right, you dumb ox! Come on in, if you must! If

those trees start after you, you'll know that I'm not drunk or crazy!'

"He wanted to peer out at the manure-pile, but was dragged through the living-room and only got a glance that showed the three things standing there. Then his trouser legs were jerked off and the socks with them.

" 'I knew we shouldn't have let that manure go up here without investigating!' muttered the worthy doorman. 'You'd best wash yourself, sir.'

"BLENKINS SAW out of the window that the sun was getting very low. As soon as it was gone, he knew, those tree-men would drag themselves out of the soil and come for him. If he hurried . . .

"Ten minutes later, dressed to the satisfaction of his enforced censor, he left the apartment and breathed a sigh of relief as the elevator shot them down to the street. To the elaborate apologies of the two attendants he returned no answer except a brief. 'Well, no harm done after all — sure you meant well.'

"When he had gone, the two looked at each other and burst into a peal of laughter. 'It's a wonder it wasn't pink snakes instead of trees walking after him! You know how big a pile of empty bottles there is up there — scattered everywhere all over the place? Enough to kill you and me, Bates!"

"But Blenkins was hurrying along the streets to a police station a few blocks off. At last he came to it and in the large, well-lighted doorway stood a huge figure in uniform. He could have been the brother of the doorman back at the apartment. The association of ideas suddenly struck home on Blenkins and his hurrying feet faltered. Instead of turning to enter he found himself walking past the station, his mind in a sudden turmoil. What should he say to the police, anyway? Trees walking around on his roof, that were going to seed and overrun Earth. Trees that talked and grew wings. We-e-ll. And suppose they went back with him, even though they didn't believe what he said. They *couldn't* believe it! But even if they destroyed the trees, what then? The world would be saved, of course, but he, Blenkins, would spend the rest of his days in an asylum as sure as the sun was setting across the Hudson River.

"And that finally was what settled the matter. He walked the streets for hours under the lamplight, not daring to go back home. After a while he entered a restaurant and ate some food. Then he walked the streets some more. Finally he went to a saloon he knew

where they stayed open all night and managed to forget his troubles over a dozen stiff drinks. But soon after dawn he grew sober all at once and no amount of whiskey seemed able to remedy the condition. About eight he was out walking once more and glancing hopelessly into the windows of the stores, just now being opened for the day's trade.

"PRESENTLY HE was attracted by a window full of tools and hardware of all kinds. There were wrenches and saws and drills and axes — the axes gave him the last desperate notion. He stopped as though he had been pole-axed and stood staring at them — axes of all sizes, with the steel polished and glistening in the early sunlight. Some had the back of the head painted red and some green. The green ones fascinated him; they were almost the color of the sap that had welled out of the gun wound in the Babbler's body. Then he entered the store . . .

"When he got to his apartment house, Bates solicitously offered to help him into the elevator. 'Quite a night of it you had, sir!' he murmured with secret admiration. 'Let me stand those parcels over here, Mr. Blenkins.'

"Blenkins thanked him abstractedly and, arriving at the top floor, stood a moment eyeing the closed door that led to his apartment. 'Help you in, sir,' offered the operator. But Blenkins refused. This thing would have to be done by himself without help. The elevator descended and left him there alone. With a shiver he glanced at his watch — nine-thirty. If the trees had gone back at dawn they should by now be thoroughly drunk with manure. It had taken them less than half an hour last evening. He cautiously opened the door a crack. The living room was empty. He tiptoed in and set his purchases quietly on the floor. Now to cross the living room and peer through the French doors. There they were — all three of them — solidly rooted in the pile of manure! Ah, but would they leap out at him if he showed himself?

"IN GREAT indecision he found a glass — unwashed — and emptied the last of a bottle into it. His eyes glanced around the room and he was suddenly struck by the absence of manure stains. If the trees had walked here last night, their roots would have made a pig-sty of his living room — perhaps they had remained all night where they were!

"Well, that thought gave him courage to open his parcels and bring forward the axe and the saw. A long pull at a fresh bottle of rye gave him the final

push that brought him, wild-eyed, to the side of the manure pile. He stood there looking at the quiet branches armed with thick, elongated leaves and a great hatred for these creatures shook him like a fever. Before he had time to think, the axe had bit chunkily into the body of Brownie and the green sap splashed. Now in a panic of fear, he rained blow on blow until the splintered trunk lay in pieces and even the arms were separated from the hand-like leaves. He paused to wipe the moisture from his forehead and noticed with horror that the leaves were commencing to wriggle. He chopped at them again and again, but the mutilated pieces seemed capable of separate life.

"The thought of fire came to him and in an instant he had raced into the living room and thrown newspapers and books into the great fireplace and set them alight — then back to the roof and picking up pieces of the tree to throw on the blaze. The last piece — half an arm — wriggled in his hands and he dropped it with a shudder on the hearth and raked it into the fierce heat with his toe.

"Sobbing with excitement and fear, Blenkins returned to the roof and commenced on Shorty, half expecting him to have been aroused. But he disposed of him as he had the first and broke up two empty wooden liquor cases to add to the fierceness of his bonfire, throwing in books by the armful to help out. When it came to the Babbler, his strength was almost gone and he dragged him from the manure bodily and sawed him in half. The root end went in the fireplace all right, but the branch-end trailed on the hearth and the leaves writhed for five minutes. Blenkins says that he was violently sick for half an hour immediately afterward and then came back to the living room and cleaned things up as best he could before falling asleep.

"Well," remarked Colonel Marsh. "That's the yarn — take it or leave it."

And, as you see, I have taken it.

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 (*Continued From Page 9*)

One author fitted his requirements very well indeed: Jules Verne. Many of Verne's novels are not only chock full of science (as accurate as possible for the author of that time), but you can see in reading them that the author had a very definite interest in transmitting information — there is a great deal of "fact" which could be abridged, eliminated without harming the story for the new reader. Verne often presented more scientific facts than was necessary either for verisimilitude or in order to make his speculations (discoverie or inventions based on these facts) comprehensible and plausible.

Unfortunately, Jules Verne was not only a unique individual, but you just do not find very many writers in any period who combine his honesty in writing imaginative literature (he refused to let his characters land on the moon in *Around the Moon* because, within the limits of his assumptions there would be no way of their getting off) — his respect for the facts as known to him — and his skill in delighting the reader. There were certainly not enough writers like Verne, living or dead, to fill a magazine the size of AMAZING STORIES month after month, indefinitely.

More than this, the person who tries to write really "amazing" stories this way is either going to fall into traps, or have to walk into them deliberately. He will fall into them either from ignorance (not knowing what the present state of scientific knowledge really is), misinformation (things which present day scientists "know" but which aren't so), honest but faulty extrapolation, or laziness. He will walk into traps by way of taking excessive license for the sake of the story.

You can't always tell whether an author deliberately walked into a trap or fell in.

The only feasible means of geting off Earth, according to the science of Verne's time, was the rocket principle. I don't have the data handy at the moment, so can't say whether there was any literature on rocketry available to him at the time he wrote *From the Earth to the Moon;* in any event, he decided that the most feasible means of getting a sufficient thrust to escape Earth's gravitational field was by means of a giant cannon. Theoretically, fine — but would the experiment have worked out that way? Would a missile from a gun the size of the *Columbiad,* using the type and amount of explosive he describes, achieve the kind of orbit he describes?

Did he fall into a trap when

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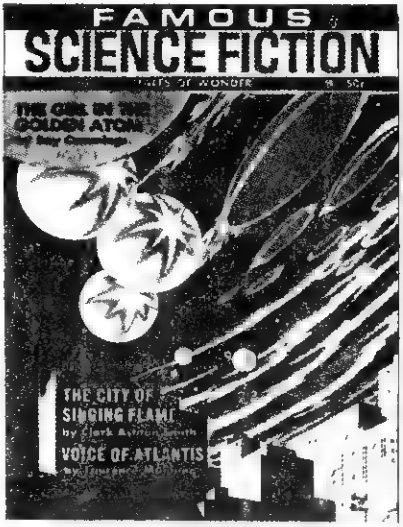

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he ignored the obvious fact that the initial thrust would crush the passengers into fine smears on the walls of the missile, or was this something he had to walk into for the sake of a story?

He refused to multiply his entities, to "invent" science (as Wells did with his "Cavourite") in order to explain away impossibilities. But he could not *tell* the reader that he was taking poetic licenses for the sake of the story without spoiling the story.

BUT THIS ALONE throws doubt upon the value of science fiction as a method of scientific instruction. Human knowledge is always imperfect, always more imperfect than most experts imagine at any particular time. Any teacher, no matter how honest and scrupulous, is going to transmit *some* misinformation; it can't be avoided. However, using a system which *requires* a certain amount of misinformation to be mixed along with the sound instruction, deliberately, *without adequate warning to the "student"* is something else indeed.

The untutored readers of "instructional" science fiction undoubtedly picked up a fair amount of sound principles in some stories; but they also "learned" a sizeable fraction of nonsense along with the sense — and in a good story, the two are well homogenized. When you "learn" something wrong under enjoyable circumstances, it's very hard to get rid of it. So far as "instructional" science fiction is concerned, this probably has not ruined any lives; it may have soured a number of readers upon science fiction

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once, inspired by particular stories, they started studying and found out that a fair amount of what they thought was science was pseudo-science or worse.

To repeat: Any method of teaching has its imperfections; any body of information you get now will be imperfect. But a method of teaching that requires imparting what the teacher knows to be false or misleading without correction encourages ignorance, misplaced enthusiasm, etc., to masquerade as authority, is *ipso facto* a bad method.

The present writer is not equipped to detect all, or probably even most of the false or misleading material in science fiction written for science fiction magazines under the standard of instruction. But from what I have detected myself, added to what persons who have convinced me that they do know have told me, or written, my conclusion is that very few science fiction tales written under this standard are untainted.

You can get one or two very simple propositions across, by way of writing a story with the main intent to teach. To be really effective, you have to be skilled in the art of delighting and moving.

Most of the writers with suffifcient scientific background to attempt instructional science fiction have had very little skill in writing fiction. The reader was held to the page in these stories simply because he brought to the story a very strong motivation for reading science fiction; what was there on the page mostly bored everyone else, although some could read a little of it just for the pleasure of laughing at ridiculously bad writing, inept story construction, etc. Most of the few writers who had both the background and the ability to write an entertaining story had to walk into the trap. As T. O'Conor Sloane often admitted in his comments on letters of objection to scientific absurdities in the stories, you had to allow for poetic license if you were going to have amazing stories at all. And you couldn't lard the stories with footnotes, warning the reader that here we are indulging in sheer fantasy, etc.

Thus, good criticism of science fiction written from this base (*doceat*) will not start out by picking the exhibit to pieces as if it were written from some other base. The exhibit will be adjudged "good of its kind" to the extent that it achieves the purpose of informing the reader without misleading him.

But the critic concerned with fiction, as such, is most likely to have to note that writing science fiction with the

purpose of *docoat* uppermost is wrong from the start. And it doesn't make much difference whether you are trying to teach science or something else; the method is defective, and seeming success here and there comes from the writer who may have started out with the intent of teaching — but when it came to writing the story, the art of delighting and moving the reader took over.

WHAT ACTUALLY happened in the early science fiction magazines? What sort of stories did the readers enjoy most widely and heartily?

You can find the answer in the letters departments of the various magazines in the 20's and 30's. The stories received most enthusiastically were (a) those which were most imaginative and amazing (b) those which contained fascinating speculations that the minority of science-minded, sometimes scientifically trained, readers could argue about — with the author and with each other. The two most popular stories that AMAZING STORIES ran under the aegis of Hugo Gernsback were *The Moon Pool*, by A. Merritt and *The Skylark of Space*, by E. E. Smith, Ph.D. And what do we find in these two tales?

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There may possibly be a few dribbles of scientific information in *The Moon Pool;* if so, they are incidental and obviously the story was not written in order to get them across to the reader. *The Skylark of Space* is full of scientfic speculation, which is (or was at the time) of great interest to the science fiction lover who had a scientific background. What the uninformed reader may have learned from the story is dubious; and the unsophisticated reader probably got a lot of misimpressions, since Dr. Smith acknowledges that he took two whopping poetic licenses, and may have deliberately walked into other, lesser traps as well.

I was entirely unsophisticated in science upon first reading *The Skylark of Space* and saw nothing wrong with what I could follow; what Dr. Smith obviously regarded as the most fascinating speculations in the story were far beyond me.

For an example of a breath-takingly misleading tale, passed as "sound" by the magazine's Board of Scientific Advisers, if you believe that every story was screened in advance by one or more of the names listed on the Board (and at the time, I am sure that I was not the only innocent who believed so; actually, I now suspect that only stories about which Mr. Gernsback or Editor Lasser had doubts was passed on) consider *The Marble Virgin* by Kennie McDowd. (SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, June 1929).

A device has been invented by means of which elements are transmuted. The story includes a discussion of the composition of matter: ". . . 'An atom was long believed to be the smallest particle of indivisible matter. Science then learned that atoms possess constituent parts — positively electrified "protons", with countless infinitesimal negatively-electrified "electrons" massed in a spinning, darting planetary-system about them. And it is the number of these alone that determines the element! Whether it is gold, iron, silver, a lump of potash — or live flesh!

"You see? If by some means or process the number of electrons could be altered, subtracted or added at will, then any substance might be changed into some other substance! . . ."

For 1929, this may not give too bad an elementary notion of atoms and the reason why one element is different from another (and suggests why the oldtime Alchemists were in a blind alley, trying to transmute elements by chemical combinations plus prayers and spells). However, that is just the beginning. To demonstrate, Huxhold takes the leg broken from a small statue which the narra-

tor had carved, puts it into the "electron dissolver" and our hero watches while Huxhold turns dials, etc., and the marble reveals itself ". . . *as quivering, bloody flesh!*"

So — guess what? Right! The narrator has carved his Galatea in marble and is half in love with her; so the marble statue is put into the electron dissolver, dials manipulated, and lo! we have Naomi, the marble virgin who is our heroine.

Not a word, not an indication in the story that the human body is made up of considerably more than flesh, blood, and bone; or what a job it would be to get just these three elements alone in the right place (don't forget — it was a *solid marble statue,* not a model of human female anatomy, inside and out), just instant transmutation from marble into living human being while the clock strikes seven. Naomi walks out of the cabinet . . .

No, I'm not making this up! This masterpiece of its kind appeared in the initial issue of SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, the same issue where it was stated on the editorial page: "Science fiction, as published in SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, is a tremendous new force in America. They are the stories that are discussed by inventors, by scientists, and in the classroom. Teachers insist that pupils read them, because they widen the young man's horizon, as nothing else can. Wise parents, too, let their children read this type of story, because they know that it keeps them abreast of the times, educates them and supplants the vicious and debasing sex story."

And, below: "There has been altogether too much pseudo-science fiction of a questionable quality in the past. Over-enthusiastic authors with little scientific training have rushed into print and unconsciously misled the reader by the distortion of scientific facts to achieve results that are clearly impossible."

Well, yes — this was my in-

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troduction to the atom, and reading *The Marble Virgin* did widen my horizon, as nothing else at the time could have; later on, it had to be narrowed down to the actualities, as I saw nothing wrong with the story at the time. And while this is an extreme case, it was pretty much the same with instructional science fiction in general; I picked up some sound information that I did not know before, but there was more misinformation that I had to un-learn, and it may well be that I still retain some of it. I'm not sorry, you understand; it was great fun.

But I might have learned a great deal more of value to the process of living by reading Boccaccio, Ovid, etc.

THE RESPONSE of the readers to this story is instructive. There were those who knew enough science to spot this as a prime example of just what Gernsback was berating in his paragraph on pseudo-science fiction; some thought it was too sentimental and "mushy", without finding any fault with the "science"; very many just loved it. And those who thought the story was good *intensely resented being told that there WAS something wrong with it.* They felt no animus against either the author or the editor for perpetrating such nonsense as "sci-

entific", in a magazine claiming to screen out "pseudo-science fiction of questionable quality". It was just beastly of these "destructive" critics to mention flaws.

Not all stories which were bad in the way that *The Marble Virgin* was bad were popular with the readers. But when a story was liked, then the majority of minds were closed against seeing any errors, distortions, or misinformation.

Very possibly, many of the younger readers had only managed to obtain parental (or other adult) tolerance of their reading science fiction on the grounds that these stories were educational. Pointing out that particular stories were mis-educational could pose a threat to their continued permission to enjoy amazing, wonderful, or astounding stories, if parents read the letters section. And it's painful to find out that you have been deceived.

Somewhat less than a year after *The Marble Virgin* appeared, Clayton Magazines brought out a new title: ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE. For three issues, it presented both science fiction and weird and occult fiction, the latter a minority; after that, only science fiction was used.

But this was not presented as primarily a vehicle of instruction; ASTOUNDING was clearly meant to be entertainment of the pulp action variety. Editor Bates noted that good science fiction had instructional and inspirational values, too; he approved of these values; but his first purpose was to entertain, to find enjoyable stories that

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#1, August 1963: The Man With a Thousand Legs, Frank Belknap Long; **A Thing of Beauty,** Wallace West; **The Yellow Sign,** Robert W. Chambers; **The Maze and the Monster,** Edward D. Hoch; **The Death of Halpin Frayser,** Ambrose Bierce; **Babylon: 70 M.,** Donald A. Wollheim; **The Inexperienced Ghost,** H. G. Wells; **The Unbeliever,** Robert Silverberg; **Fidel Bassin,** W. J. Stamper; **The Last Dawn,** Frank Lillie Polock, **The Undying Head** Mark Twain.

#2, November 1963: The Space-Eaters, Frank Belknap Long; **The Faceless Thing,** Edward D. Hoch; **The Red Room,** H. G. Wells; **Hungary's Female Vampire,** Dean Lipton; **A Tough Tussle,** Ambrose Bierce; **Doorslammer,** Donald A. Wollheim; **The Electric Chair,** George Waight; **The Other One,** Jerryl L. Keane; **The Charmer,** Archie Binns; **Clarissa,** Robert A. W. Lowndes; **The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes,** Rudyard Kipling.

#3, February 1964: The Seeds of Death, David H. Keller; **The Seeking Thing,** Janet Hirsch; **A Vision of Judgment,** H. G. Wells; **The Place of the Pythons,** Arthur J. Burks; **Jean Bouchon,** S. Baring-Gould; **The Door,** Rachel Cosgrove Payes; **One Summer Night,** Ambrose Bierce; **Lucilla Miller,** Mary Wilkins-Freeman; **They That Wait,** H. S. W. Chibbett; **The Repairer of Reputations,** Robert W. Chambers.

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moved along and didn't get bogged down in lectures, etc.

The established readers of science fiction, who added the new magazine to their list, showed mixed reactions. Some considered the pulp format and formula approach to science fiction demeaning; some tried the magazines and found the "science" too pseudo, where they could find any at all. Some, like myself at the time, enjoyed a good percentage of the stories, but with twinges of guilt — where was the science? Could a pulp magazine be respectable at all? But most interesting is the number of readers who wrote in to Editor Bates enthusiastically, saying that, at last! they had a science fiction magazine to read which didn't put them to sleep every few pages with dreary scientific lectures, etc.

Facing the competition from ASTOUNDING, WONDER STORIES began to become more entertaining in content, although Gernsback never abandoned the idea that science fiction should be instructive, first o all. Under the editorship of T. O'Conor Sloane, AMAZING STORIES both moved farther away from the original publisher's statement or purpose and generally slanted its appeal to younger readers.

The initial experiment was a failure; later publishers and editors learned the lesson.

Down To Earth

SINCE THIS department has to be made up just before the first issue of FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION reaches the newsstands, we shan't be able to include any of your comments upon our initial effort, although it is gratifying to see the number of responses to the advertisement for it which appeared in the Winter issue of MAGAZINE OF HORROR — just a few weeks ago, at this writing. The necessities of scheduling a number of publications forced us to bring out this second issue a month earlier than we intended; we have not really shifted to a bi-monthly schedule. For the time being, FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION and MAGAZINE OF HORROR will appear simultaneously, every third month, with STIRRING MYSTERY STORIES appearing the month thereafter — three quarterly publications.

A few years before I became an editor, John W. Campbell, who had just recently become an editor, was writing notes of apology to readers for stories promised in a certain issue which did not appear there explaining that he hadn't yet learned that type was not made of rubber. After a quarter of a century, I still haven't learned it! So it is only fair to warn you now that announcements of stories coming up in the next issue amount to statements of intentions, some of which may not be realized.

Fortunately, I did not announce *Dust*, by WALLACE WEST for our first issue; but nonetheless I'm sorry it did not get in, because Wally has been one of my favorite authors ever since I read *The Laughing Duke*, in the February 1932 issue of WEIRD TALES (been wanting to get that one into MOH and hope to make it eventually), *The End of Time*, ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE, March 1933, *The Retreat From Utopia*, March 1934 ASTOUNDING STORIES, and *The Phantom Dictator*, ASTOUNDING STORIES, August 1935. It wasn't until 1939 that I got to read *The Last Man*, AMAZING STORIES, February 1929 and April 1966, which was his first appearance in a science fiction magazine; and between that and *Glimpses of the Moon*, ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION, June 1965, I counted 47 entries in the science fiction indexes 1926-1966. Several of these are not science fiction, and there are still others which appeared in WEIRD TALES, etc.; and some of them have been expanded or ingeniously combined into such novels as *Lords of Atlantis*, *The Bird of Time*, *The Memory Bank*, *The*

Did You Miss These Back Issues Of MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#4, May 1964: Out of print.

#5, September 1964: Cassius, Henry S. Whitehead; **Love at First Sight,** J. L. Miller; **Five-Year Contract,** J. Vernon Shea; **The House of the Worm,** Merle Prout, **The Beautiful Suit,** H. G. Wells; **A Stranger Came to Reap,** Stephen Dentinger; **The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing,** Walt Liebscher; **Bones,** Donald A. Wollheim; **The Ghostly Rental,** Henry James.

#6, November 1964: Caverns of Horror, Laurence Manning; **Prodigy,** Walt Liebscher; **The Mask,** Robert W. Chambers; **The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Warde,** Robert Barbour Johnson; **The Feminine Fraction,** David Grinnell; **Dr. Heidegger's Experiment,** Nathaniel Hawthorne; **The Pacer,** August Derleth; **The Moth,** H. G. Wells; **The Door to Saturn,** Clark Ashton Smith.

#7, January 1965: The Thing From — Outside, George Allan England; **Black Thing at Midnight,** Joseph Payne Brennan; **The Shadows on the Wall,** Mary Wilkins-Freeman; **The Phantom Farmhouse,** Seabury Quinn; **The Oblong Box,** Edgar Allan Poe; **A Way With Kids,** Ed M. Clinton; **The Devil of the Marsh,** E. B. Marriott-Watson; **The Shuttered Room,** H. P. Lovecraft & August Derleth.

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

Beyond The Singing Flame

by Clark Ashton Smith

River of Time, Outposts in Space, and *The Time-Lockers,* all but the second published by Avalon. Avalon is also publishing *The Everlasting Exiles,* of which the story in ANLOG listed above is the opening section, combined with material that appeared in the short novelet bearing the book title; it will be out in early 1967. We told you something about the background of *Dust* in our last issue.

Talking to SAM MOSKOWITZ one one day about FSF, and mentioning this story by Wallace West, resulted in his obtaining for me a copy of a remarkable 19th century science fictiin tale dealing with air pollution, *The Doom of London,* by Robert Barr. You'll find it in the Spring MAGAZINE OF HORROR — it's pretty frightening even today — and it makes an interesting companion piece to the later story.

The earliest listing for an appearance by A. BERTRAM CHANDLER is *"This Means War!"*, which ran in the May 1944 issue of ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION. His biggest hit between 1944 and 1950 seems to have been *Giant Killer* (ASF October 1945) which I won't spoil for anyone who hasn't read it by telling you the theme. Between then and now he has become best known for his loosely-connected series dealing with the Rim Worlds, out on the edge of space, and *Rimghost* (in case you turned here first) is part of the series.

The fourth chapter of Sam Moskowitz's *Seekers of Tomorrow,* which we reviewed very briefly, but recommended highly, in our last issue, deals with EDMOND HAMILTON, whose first published story, *The Monster-God of Mamurth,* was reprinted in the Winter 1966/67 (#14) issue of MAGAZINE OF HORROR. When this story appeared in WEIRD TALES (August 1926), AMAZING STORIES was in its fourth issue, but

it was not until the January 1928 issue of that magazine that Hamilton first became known to the majority of AMAZING's readers, who did not read WEIRD TALES. They greeted him as a new talent, not realizing that seven science fiction stories by this author had appeared in WT, one of them a short novel in three parts, another a long novel in four.

One of the most vivid of these short stories was *The Moon Menace*, which appeared so soon after the first story dealing with matter-transmission to appear in AMAZING STORIES (*Radio Mates*, by Benjamin Witwer, July 1927) as to rule out any likelihood of influence or imitation — besides, Farnsworth Wright rarely held stories accepted for less than six months before publication.

Television was still a rich man's toy in 1927, but there nonetheless was such a thing; Hugo Gernsback (who introduced the word "television" to American readers in 1909) started daily radio television broadcasts on his own Radio Station WRNY in 1928. (Moskowitz tells about this in his chapter on Gernsback in *Explorres of the Infinite.*) So as amusing as this television section of this story may seem today, it was advanced scientific speculation in 1927; and other elements in the story were entirely original.

Re-reading our editorial in the first issue, I find that one point was not put as clearly as it might have been. Let's try again. The "famous" aspect of the stories we reprint here refers to their having been widely known and liked by the readers of the magazine in which they were originally published. Obviously if they were widely known today, there would be little point in repeating them. We're bringing them to you because they are *not* widely known today, although various of the authors may be widely known.

DAVID H. KELLER, M.D., for

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#8, April 1965: The Black Laugh, William J. Makin; **The Hand of Glory,** R. H. D. Barham; **The Garrison,** David Grinnell; **Passeur,** Robert W. Chambers; **The Lady of the Velvet Collar,** Washington Irving; **Jack,** Reynold Junker; **The Burglar-Proof Vault,** Oliver Taylor; **The Dead Who Walk,** Ray Cummings.

#9, June 1965: The Night Wire, H. F. Arnold; **Sacrilege,** Wallace West; **All the Stain of Long Delight,** Jerome Clark; **Skulls in the Stars,** Robert E. Howard; **The Phographs,** Richard Marsh; **The Distortion out of Space,** Francis Flagg; **Guarantee Period,** William M. Danner; **The Door in the Wall,** H. G. Wells; **The Three Low Masses,** Alphonse Daudet; **The Whistling Room,** William Hope Hodgson.

#10, August 1965: The Girl at Heddon's, Pauline Kappel Prilucik; **The Torture of Hope,** Villiers de L'Isle-Adam; **The Cloth of Madness,** Seabury Quinn; **The Tree,** Gerald W. Page; **In the Court of the Dragon,** Robert W. Chambers; **Placide's Wife,** Kirk Mashburn; **Come Closer,** Joanna Russ; **The Plague of the Living Dead,** A. Hyatt Verrill.

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

THE MAN WHO AWOKE

by Laurence Manning

Did You Miss These Back Issues Of MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#11, November 1965: The Empty Zoo, Edward D. Hoch; **A Psychological Shipwreck,** Ambrose Bierce; **The Call of the Mech-Men,** Laurence Manning; **Was It a Dream?,** Guy de Maupassant; **Under the Hau Tree,** Katherine Yates; **The Head of Du Bois,** Dorothy Norman Cooke; **The Dweller in Dark Valley,** (verse), Robert E. Howard; **The Devil's Pool,** Greye la Spina.

#12, Winter 1965/66: The Faceless God, Robert Bloch; **Master Nicholas,** Seabury Quinn; **But Not the Herald,** Roger Zelasny; **Dr. Muncing, Exorcist,** Gordon MacCreagh; **The Affair at 7 Rue de M-,** John Steinbeck; **The Man in the Dark,** Irwin Ross; **The Abyss,** Robert A. W. Lowndes; **Destination** (verse), Robert E. Howard; **Memories of HPL,** Muriel E. Eddy; **The Black Beast,** Henry S. Whitehead.

#13, Summer 1966: The Thing in the House, H. F. Scotten; **Divine Madness,** Roger Zelasny; **Valley of the Lost,** Robert E. Howard; **Heredity,** David H. Keller; **Dwelling of the Righteous,** Anna Hunger; **Almost Immortal,** Austin Hall.

#14, Winter 1966/67: The Lair of Star-Spawn, Derleth & Scherer; **The Vacant Lot,** Mary Wilkins-Freeman; **Proof,** S. Fowler Wright; **Comes Now the Power,** Roger Zelazny; **The Moth Message,** Laurence Manning; **The Friendly Demon,** Daniel DeFoe; **Dark Hollow,** Emil Petaja; **An Inhabitant of Carcosa,** Ambrose Bierce; **The Monster-God of Mamurth,** Edmond Hamilton.

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example, is not as widely known among science fiction readers today as he was in the 20's and 30's; the last new story of his that first appeared in a science fiction magazine was *The Growing Wall*, SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY #9, Winter 1942. The present story combines several characteristic elements of this author into a unified whole — and we wonder if the principal one may not turn out to be possible some day, perhaps soon.

LAURENCE MANNING's name has appeared twice in science fiction magazines with new stories since 1935, when his two-part serial, *World of the Mist*, ran in the September and October issues of WONDER STORIES. He had had 13 previous stories in that magazine, (excluding a collaboration with Fletcher Pratt), starting with *The Wreck of the Asteroid* (a sequel to *The Voyage of the Asteroid*, WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY, Summer 1932) in the December, 1932, and January and February, 1933 issues; and all of them had been of considerably higher quality than the average for that period. A sequel to *World of the Mist* was accepted, and scheduled for publication in 1936; but Gernsback's mail-order circulation plan did not bring sufficient response, so that the April 1936 issue was not only the last issue of the magazine that appeared on the newsstands, as announced therein, but the last issue under the original publisher.

Various readers of MAGAZINE OF HORROR, when commenting on the "Stranger Club" series of tales, the last one of which appears in this issue of FSF, also suggested that we run the earlier series dealing with *The Man Who Awoke*. These stories aren't suitable for MOH, but they certainly belong in FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION; and we have arranged with the author to bring the five of them to you, in order, as soon as we can.

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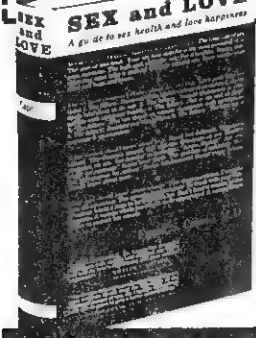

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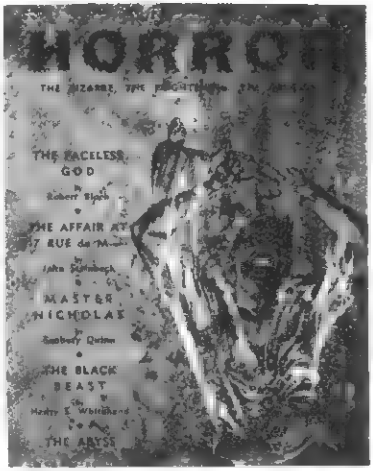

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Please rate the stories in the order of your preference, as many as possible. Ties are always acceptable. If you thought a story was bad (rather than just last place), put an "X" beside it. If you thought a story was truly outstanding, above just first place, mark an "O" beside it. (Then the next-best would be "1".)

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DUST

THE WHITE CITY

RIMGHOST

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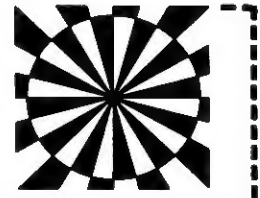

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He discovered that the key to unlocking the powerhouse of the Subconscious Mind lies in a simple fact: *the Subconscious is triggered into action by PICTURES, far faster than by words.*

Since that moment he has experimented with a series of mental Visual Images — tested them on over one thousand men and women from all walks of life. People with no greater education than yourself. People both young and old. Men and women without any particular Psychic gift. He discovered the technique of PSCYHO-PICTOGRAPHY works. It always works. Quite literally, it CANNOT FAIL, because it operates as mechanically as any other Law of Nature.

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